

Sight & Sound

*Monthly
Film Review*

June

1/6



RAYMOND CHANDLER: Oscar Night in Hollywood

RICHARD WINNINGTON

PHILIP HOPE-WALLACE

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CONTENTS

<i>The Front Page—</i>	147	UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES	168
INTERVIEW WITH CLEMENT Francis Koval	149	DICKENS, GRIFFITH & THE FILM TO-DAY (I) S. M. Eisenstein	169
LONDON—PARIS—HOLLYWOOD J..Morgan, Francis Koval, Harold Leonard	152	REVALUATIONS (3)	
THE SEVENTH ART	156	SHOOTING STARS Roger Manvell	172
OSCAR NIGHT IN HOLLYWOOD Raymond Chandler	157	BOOK REVIEWS	175
A NOTE ON FILM DIRECTION Bernard Miles	162	<i>Supplements—</i>	
<i>Films of the Month—</i>		AMATEURS: ANCIENT ROME IN GANGSTER TOWN Marie Seton	176
ALL THE KING'S MEN Richard Winnington	163	ECONOMICS: THE SUPPORTING FILM Adrian Reid	178
JOUR DE FETE Jean Queval	165	FILM SOCIETY NOTES	181
ACTING Philip Hope-Wallace	167	CORRESPONDENCE	182
		FILM GUIDE	184
		COMPETITION	185

ON THE COVER: Richard Widmark in Jules Dassin's forthcoming Anglo-American thriller with a London setting, *Night and the City*. Other players include Googie Withers and Gene Tierney.

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The Front Page

National Film Finance Corporation

The National Film Finance Corporation's first Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, recently published by the Stationery Office, is a lucid and convincing document. It contains a summarised history of the Corporation, its terms of reference, its methods of finance, and the amount of business so far handled. In the first year there were 261 enquiries from film producers, of which 153 were "seriously discussed" and 51 finally approved.

The films so far subsidised have been of all kinds. They range from *The Third Man* to *The Third Visitor*, from *State Secret* to *Old Mother Riley*, *Headmistress*. The most substantial loan to any single producing company was made to British Lion, who had estimated that £2,000,000 would be necessary "to finance its production programme already planned". An independent investigation, however, showed this estimate to be "quite inadequate", and the figure was raised by a further £1,000,000. Ealing and A.B.P.C. have made no applications: independents assisted include Anthony Havelock-Allan (*The Interrupted Journey*, *The Eagle and the Lamb*), Jay Lewis (*Morning Departure*), and Nat Bronsten (*Give Us This Day*). The Corporation also subsidised various companies specialising in second features—notably Exclusive (*Dr. Morelle*, *Man In Black*), and Mancunian (*What a Carry On*, *Over the Garden Wall*).

Inevitably, by its terms of reference, the Corporation's selections have been based upon economic grounds. The Corporation came into being at a time when production in Britain had slumped alarmingly; the Rank Organisation had drastically reduced its production schedule, and many independents were marking time. The need was for first aid, and the Corporation gave it by subsidising in part the production of 51 feature films between April, 1949, and April, 1950. Without this aid it is fair to say that the bulk of this programme would never have reached the screen.

The report, therefore, proves that, within the limit of its resources, the Corporation has succeeded in its first objective—that of maintaining British film production. It goes forward into a new year with an amended Constitution whereby it can provide the whole backing for a film instead of only the "middle money", as hitherto. Another £1,000,000 has been added to its resources, and this, Mr. Harold Wilson estimates, will be enough to provide for a further year's operation.

In spite, however, of its successful record so far, and in spite of these new powers, it is impossible to believe that the Corporation alone and unaided can do more than alleviate a situation which demands more drastic treatment. Although the patient is being kept alive by emergency blood transfusions, he shows no signs of ultimate recovery.

Some major operation is impending, whether the surgeon is to come from within the ranks of the industry itself, or from the Government. The possible developments are many, but if the Corporation is to continue as a central agent in working out a new pattern for the industry, one point stands out clearly. At the moment

the Corporation can accept or reject each single proposal only by the criterion of a prospective return in cash. Thus a run of the mill travelogue or a second feature, of whatever quality so long as it is a good box-office bet, may have to be preferred to first feature films of a more venturesome or experimental nature, even though these may deserve support from a long-term point of view. This means that financial responsibility is divorced from policy in a way unparalleled by other public corporations in a similar position. It is interesting to speculate how the B.B.C. would have developed if popular taste had been the sole criterion in programme building. Certainly, it could never have developed the many types of programmes which, appealing at first only to a minority, gradually expanded their attraction to the greater mass of the listening public.

It would, of course, be unthinkable that the Corporation should have power to dictate the content and style of films submitted to them, or should become involved in any way in the creative side of film-making. Nevertheless, any national film industry, like any production company within it, stands or falls in the long run by the quality of the films it produces. Many people believe that the future stability of the industry depends, among other factors, upon low-budget, high-quality production. If the Corporation were empowered to adopt a long-term policy of supporting "quality" (and this would include imagination and experiment), even when the immediate financial prospects were uncertain, they could do much to influence the future course of the industry.

Perhaps, too, the losses would be surprisingly small. It is worth remembering that the British film industry's most prosperous phase was founded upon a group of films whose production was not inspired by a study of box-office trends. The motives which lay behind the production of *49th Parallel*, *Western Approaches* and *The Way Ahead*, and indeed *Henry V* and *Brief Encounter*, reflected leadership of a different and nobler order, and perhaps for the first time British films established a reputation, duly consolidated in financial terms, which surprised many of those who regard box-office as the leader rather than the reflection of production policy.

A British Oscar

Several contributors to this issue of SIGHT AND SOUND appear to be preoccupied with the question of Oscars: they provide a starting-point for Raymond Chandler's acid estimate of Hollywood, for Philip Hope-Wallace's comments on film acting, and Richard Winnington discusses 1949's Oscar film, *All the King's Men*. The Oscar ritual is frequently a fierce tug-of-war between art and box office, with the latter usually winning in the field of feature production. There are always cases, however, in which trade politics are of no particular account; and such

is the award to *Daybreak in Udi*, which many people may have overlooked in the glare of flashlights and ballyhoo, but which represents a just and disinterested recognition of merit. *Daybreak in Udi* is important particularly for the new ground that it breaks, for its sympathetic, informed approach to a vital problem, which should bring further attention to the work of the Crown Film Unit. The task of presenting the Colonies to the world is a solitary job which has as yet met with too little enthusiasm and reward.

Obituaries

Three recent deaths are in their different ways a loss to the cinema. Jean George Auriol, tragically killed in a motor accident at the age of 43, was one of France's foremost film critics; he founded the original *Revue du Cinema*, and revived it after the war. He also worked on the scripts of various films, including Marc Allegret's charming *Lac aux Dames*, with Simone Simon and Jean-Pierre Aumont. He numbered among his friends many film-makers as well as critics: refinement of taste, sharpness of perception, went hand in hand with a generous nature, and his death was felt as a personal loss to all professional people who had come into contact with him. *La Revue du Cinema* was a monthly informed by knowledge, enthusiasm and criticism of a high standard. Its discontinuance leaves another gap.

Walter Huston, who died at the age of 66, was a brilliant actor. He began on the stage, entered films in 1929—his most notable early screen performances were, perhaps, in Griffith's *Abraham Lincoln* and Capra's *American Madness*. It was in Wyler's *Dodsworth* (1936), in which he had previously played on the stage, that he became established in Hollywood as one of the few "character" actors of "star" value. Of his later performances, one remembers especially his richly malicious portrait of the Devil in *All That Money Can Buy*, and his aged, sinisterly energetic gold prospector in his son's *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*.

Kurt Weill's gay and bitter talent was never used as much as it should have been in the cinema. His music had a dramatic irony, a sophisticated melodic gift, and an appreciation of the refined texture most effective in background music that puts to shame many would-be symphonists whose thick scores have a credit title all to themselves on so many films to-day. As it happened, Weill's music was used mostly in film adaptations of plays for which he had written the original score—notably *Die Dreigroschenoper* in Germany and *Lady in the Dark* and *Knickerbocker Holiday* in America. He wrote some lively songs for the film musical *Where Do We Go From Here?* and his last theatre score to be used in a film adaptation was for *One Touch of Venus*, a musical of considerable charm which has recently been given a "floating" general release.

INTERVIEW WITH CLEMENT

Francis Koval



René Clément (left) talking to the Italian director, Alberto Lattuada.

AFTER THE LONDON press show of *Au-delà des grilles*, in the middle of a crowd, a young man stood timidly in the foyer of the cinema. Hardly anyone took any notice of him, while journalists were being served with drinks and passing comments on the film they had seen. He didn't even realise that these comments were rather favourable, as he didn't understand a word of English.

René Clément, the director of the film in question, would at a similar gathering in Paris find himself surrounded by friends and admirers. On his first visit to England, however, he could not expect to be recognised even by those who know him by name as a leading director of the French cinema's post-war generation. His two outstanding films, *La Bataille du Rail* and *Les Maudits*, both born out of the specific atmosphere of the immediate post-war period, were unfortunately shown in London only two or three years after they were made, and consequently failed to capture public imagination as they should have done. Even so, they were given critical recognition.

When I told René Clément how much his new film was liked by many of the London critics, he gave a sigh of relief; and when I saw him in Paris, he gave me some interesting facts about his life and career.

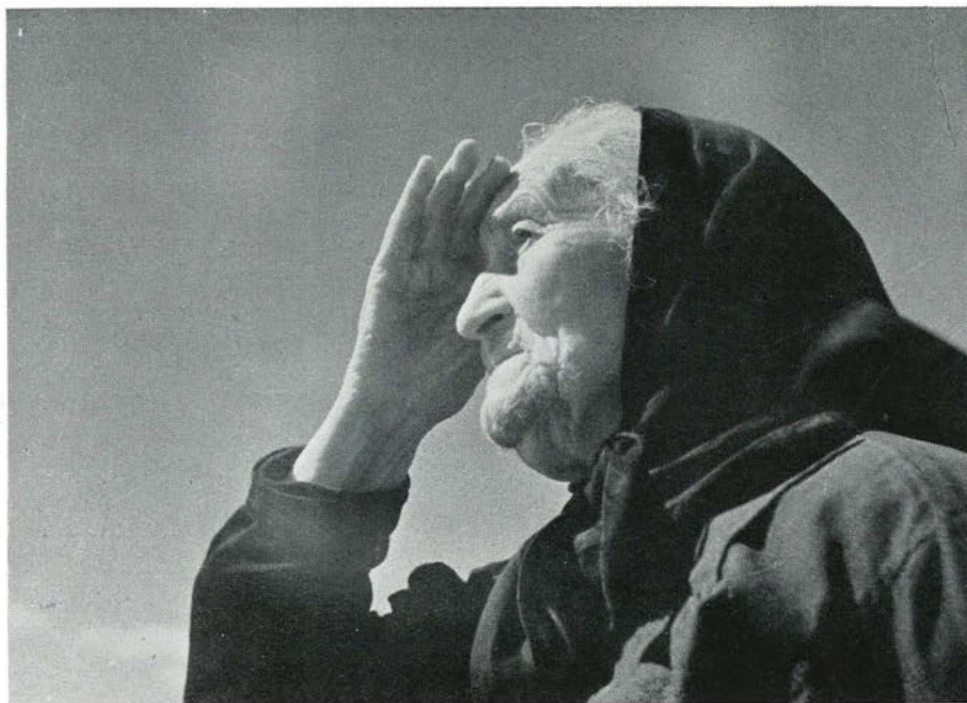
"When I was about seven", Clément said, "I was absolutely fascinated by the mere sight of the screen before even the programme started. At home I reproduced that oblong white square in every detail, with a black frame and rounded corners. The two 30 ft. films I possessed appeared to my eyes greatly improved when projected on to that miniature screen. But as the light source of my projector consisted of a paraffin lamp—and I was always experiment-

ing—it was not surprising that one day I set the house on fire, and the excitements of a home cinema came to an abrupt end.

"Not until I was twelve was I allowed to touch my projector again, and then I installed an electric lamp and began to make my own films. From my 30 ft. documentary on the castles of the Rhine I scratched off the emulsion and began to draw—frame after frame—funny little scenes. As my father was an interior decorator, I may have inherited from him some gift for drawing . . . At sixteen I was given a long-wished-for present: a real 9 mm. projector with lots of short Chaplin comedies. I never got tired of watching them again and again, till I knew by heart almost every movement. This taught me—without my realising it at the time—a great lesson in what I should call the "anatomy of the gag". I learned from Chaplin a principle that I strictly observe up to this day—that is, never try to improve a straight gag by "clever" cutting. Many of my distinguished colleagues scorn this simple rule to-day, but not to their advantage, I think".

Although Clément entered the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* after leaving school and embarked on the study of architecture, he never finished his course. "My professors decided I was too much of a poet and too little a practical mathematician. They would not approve my flights of fancy if there was no utilitarian motive behind them".

In 1931 he became a cameraman, and worked with a small unit that—undismayed by hardships and obstacles of all kinds—concentrated on documentaries. Their film, *La Zone* (directed by Georges Lacombe), caused a stir in 1933, as it brought to light the scandalous living con-



Clément's "*Occitanie*" (1936).

ditions in that desolate area of Paris' northern outskirts, where innumerable families of foreign immigrants and French unemployed led an almost subhuman existence in dilapidated slums and ramshackle huts. Right wing circles quickly called the film communist propaganda, but neither its artistic value nor its social importance could be denied.

René Clément prides himself on having done in that period every single job that is connected with making pictures. He acquired invaluable experience, and at the *Exposition Cinématographique* in 1937 he received his first reward, for the pictorial beauty of his folklore documentary, *Occitanie*, shot in that little-known southern province, Aude, wedged between the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean.

In the meantime he had a curious experience while doing his military service. He was attached to the French Army's Cinema Unit, and given the task of producing a series of instructional films. When these turned out satisfactorily to his superiors, he was one day given a book on new tactics for armoured units, written by an obscure Colonel de Gaulle. With all the resources of an Armoured Regiment at his disposal, he was supposed to make a film of 3,600 feet illustrating the technique of the *avance en flèche* in actual practice. He found the theory of Colonel de Gaulle completely absurd—and so did other officers of the regiment. As Clément had only the rank of lance-corporal, he encountered furious opposition from Captains and Majors when he ordered their tanks to advance in arrow formation, and to break through the "enemy lines" without co-operation from the infantry and without safeguarding supply lines.

The picture-maker-turned-strategist had no idea what subsequently happened to his film, but in 1940 he was rather astonished to see that the German tank formations were executing exactly the kind of manoeuvres that he, a few years back, had scornfully arranged in front of his camera.

After the disastrous armistice, Clément found himself penniless and unemployed, out of touch with the cinema whose traditional headquarters has always been in Paris. Other filmmakers who refused to work under German supervision were in the same situation. So Abel Gance, the patriarch of the French cinema, gathered them together and soon got the production of *La Vénus Aveugle* (with Vivienne Romance) on the floor of the Nice studio. Hearing of Clément's presence in the neighbourhood, he invited him to the studio and offered him a job as assistant to Henri Alekan, the lighting cameraman.

"I only found out then", Clément explained, "that I got this chance as a result of *Occitanie*, which Abel Gance had seen and bought a few years previously, in order to use some background shots".

Film activities developed slowly in the unoccupied zone, and in 1943 Clément was given an assignment to make a documentary on the work of the railways, to be called *Ceux du Rail*. This almost cost him his life, because after seven weeks' shooting he had a terrible accident while shooting one of the last scenes. He spent six months in hospital, while his film was hailed as a success. It proved the stepping stone to his first full-length feature film, made immediately after the liberation: *La Bataille du Rail*—a picture illustrating in a most impressive and quite unpretentious way the resistance fight of the French *cheminots*. In the early days of the liberation it made a vivid impact.

At the first Cannes festival in 1946, three films on which Clément had worked were shown: *Bataille du Rail*, and two others on which he had worked as "technical director"—with Cocteau for *La Belle et la Bête*, and with Noel-Noel for *Le Père Tranquille*. "Neither of these two were really in my own style", Clément remarks. "I considered myself simply a technician, and tried to bring out on the screen as much of Cocteau's and Noel-Noel's ideas as possible. I didn't expect to achieve any distinction in Cannes. A consolation prize was my boldest dream. But when *Bataille du Rail* was awarded the Grand Prix for the best direction, and on top of that a special prize, the triumph made me thoughtful and almost depressed. The sudden limelight imposed on me the obligation to keep up a certain standard in my future work—and I didn't feel at ease about it . . ."

However, the following year at Cannes, his exciting story of the escaping German U-boat, *Les Maudits*, was again awarded a prize—*Le Prix des Films d'Aventures et Policiers*. And in 1949 the prize for the best direction went at Cannes again to Clément for *Au-delà des grilles*. This is a remarkable record for a man only in his middle thirties.

As some French critics had been sceptical of the use of non-professional players in his first film, and suggested that the success of this experiment would almost certainly be jeopardised if these people had had speaking parts, Clément decided to prove them wrong—and did so in *Les*



"Les Maudits".

Maudits. Those Germans seen aboard the submarine, bickering, plotting and in the end killing each other, are disturbingly convincing in their reactions, their behaviour, even in the kind of language they use. But none of them had ever faced a camera before; they were picked out of a bunch of p.o.w.'s working in France.

"This doesn't mean that I am a 'neo-realist'," Clément emphasises. "I believe, really, in a poetic transposition of reality. Objects and happenings of real life may sometimes look extremely unreal on the screen, and that submarine film taught me a good lesson in that respect. I incorporated in it scraps of newsreels which I found in German archives, with the result that in more than one case just these shots were pointed out to me as being exaggerated or phoney.

"I certainly took great care to portray real life in *Au-delà des grilles*. Before writing the story, I spent quite some time in Genoa with Pierre Bost and Jean Aurenche, and we actually found a woman who is the prototype of Marta as played by Isa Miranda. The room seen in the film is the exact replica of the room in which she lived—probably still lives—with her daughter. I am not satisfied, though, with the final result. I intended the action to move much more along the lines of a gripping love-story. But the personality of Jean Gabin proved too strong for me, and

as we went along we had to make changes to suit his conception of Pierre's character.

"My next film will be a love story, with Michèle Morgan and Jean Marais, written by Pierre Bost. It will be called *Sait-on jamais?* and will concentrate on the strange wall of incomprehension that so often separates human beings even though they are in love with each other and living together . . ."

So far, each of Clément's films has been distinctly different in character. Each one has shown talent, imagination, originality. Every beginner has, after all, a right to commit a few failures—Clément has somehow never taken advantage yet of that right. None of the pictures he has made since the war can be called a dud, and the three he directed on his own have earned him international recognition. All this has contributed to the reputation he holds to-day in France, and not only in France: the reputation of an "heir presumptive" to a generation of film directors which includes names like René Clair, Marcel Carné, Julien Duvivier. He himself is very modest about it, and the only thing he will say with regard to the future is: "*Je veux me renouveler avec chaque film que je tourne*". And this sounds, at the same time, both promising and reassuring.

News From . . .

LONDON

THE PRODUCTION front is still not very lively, though a number of interesting projects are on hand. Meanwhile, **Irene Dunne** has arrived to play Queen Victoria; and we have said goodbye to the hard-working **Virginia Mayo**, who has completed her role (Lady Barbara Wellesley) in *Captain Hornblower*, and been shipped back to Burbank for, no doubt, a quick change of costume.

Projects: after various rumours—first, a historical romance set in Spain, and then, intriguingly, a story by **Mel Dinelli** (who scripted *The Window* and **Fritz Lang's** latest film, *House by the River*)—it now appears certain that **Carol Reed's** next subject will be a **Graham Greene** original, set in contemporary Germany. Greene, after several weeks in Germany for material and atmosphere, has now begun work on the script. **Thorold Dickinson** has finished the script of his forthcoming production, *The Secret People*, an original story by himself and the novelist **Joyce Cary**, adapted in collaboration with **Wolfgang Wilhelm**. It is set in southern France, covers several years in time, and the core of it is the impact of war and violence on a community of people.

Robert Hamer is preparing his new subject for Ealing, *The Shadow and the Peak*, from Richard Mason's novel: in contrast to the elegant and grisly humour of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, this is a modern, analytical story, the background a progressive school in Jamaica, the central characters a neurotic schoolgirl and a schoolmaster. **David Lean** is to make *The Cruise of the Breadwinner*, from H. E. Bates' novel about the adventures of a fishing-boat in the English Channel during the war. **Powell and Pressburger** are considering a version of the *Tales of Hoffmann*: and **Henry Cornelius**, director of *Passport to Pimlico*, will soon begin work on his first independent production, in association with **Monja Danischewsky**, to be called *The Galloping Major*.

An important venture is that of the **Association of Cine-Technicians** into co-operative production—a course for which a number of the Union's members have been agitating since the earlier days of the crisis. With backing agreed from the National Film Finance Corporation (£100,000), plans are now being completed: the subject is *Green Grow the Rushes*, from Howard Clewes' comedy of smugglers and civil servants in an English country village. It will be directed by **Derek Twist** (who last year made an agreeable comedy of provincial life, *All Over the Town*). Recently, the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees (N.A.T.K.E.) has made preliminary



"Dance Hall." Thwarted suicide from the Palais rooftop. Natasha Parry.

moves in a similar direction. There is much to be hoped for from this kind of modestly budgeted production within a co-operative framework.

A less rewarding prospect is the threatened discontinuance next autumn of *This Modern Age*, the Rank Organisation's two-reel monthly magazine. It seems a great pity that further financial support for it has apparently become impracticable, because *This Modern Age*—which has tackled a great variety of subjects in its brief career—was beginning to develop a more certain and positive style, and its conscientious approach to contemporary problems has always been a useful antidote to the fragmentary coverage of newsreels. Without wishing to write a post-mortem in advance, it can be said that with more daring, *This Modern Age* might well have gained a hold on the public equivalent to that of *The March of Time* in America: and one hopes it may still be possible to reverse the decision to close. In the meantime, the entry of the Pathé Documentary Unit into a similar field—a quarterly series under the generic title of *The Wealth of the World*—is a hopeful sign. Its first issue shows a lively concern with journalistic style and freshness of presentation.

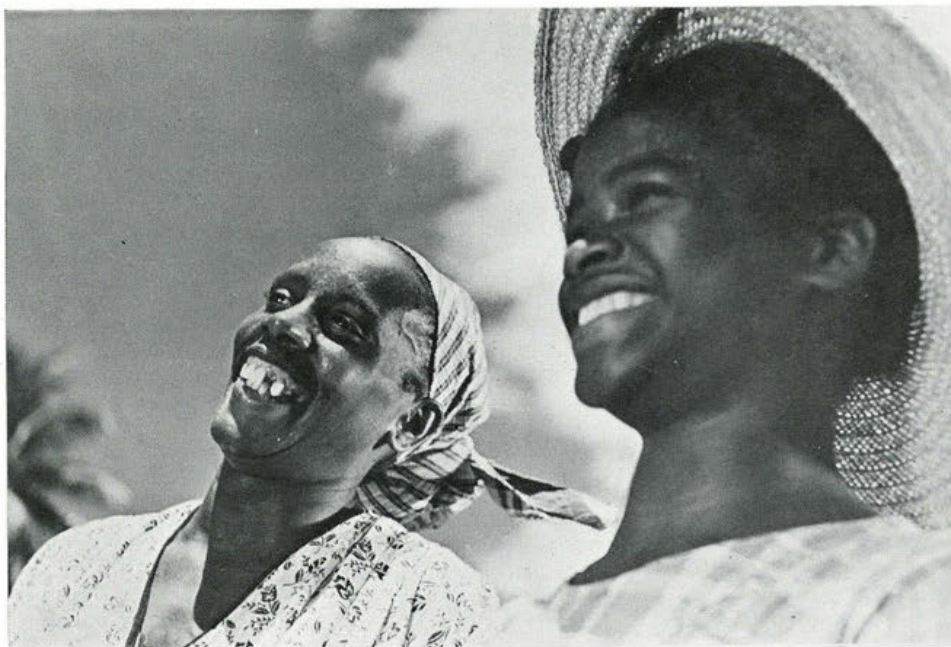
Feature films from British studios you may expect soon to see include the Korda-Selznick co-production *Gone to Earth*, a Technicolor version by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger of the Mary Webb novel, with Jennifer Jones and David Farrar: the Boulting Brothers' thriller with a contemporary political slant, *Seven Days to Noon* (Barry Jones, Olive Sloane), and Ealing's *Dance Hall*, directed by Charles Crichton, with Diana Dors and Jane Hylton.

JAMES MORGAN.

PARIS

LAST MONTH I mentioned two French short films of particular interest, and promised details of them. The first of these is called *La Montagne est Verte*, and describes the abolition of slavery in the French colonies. When last year the mortal remains of Felix Eboué, the first black-skinned governor of the French West Indies, were put to rest in the Panthéon to mark the rooth anniversary of the slaves' liberation, this event inspired the well-known producer of shorts, **J. K. Raymond-Millet**, with the idea for his film. In order to give the subject the framework it deserved, he had to change his famous motto: "produire de *petits* films de *grande* qualité", and to make not a "short" in the conventional sense, but a "big" picture, despite the limitation of footage. He sent out a unit to the islands of the Lesser Antilles, where most of the scenes were shot, the natives participating. Studio scenes, mainly concerned with the life and work of Victor Schoelcher, the untiring champion of negroes' rights in the Counsels of Paris, were done later and are of secondary importance. Judging by the reputation of the producer, and of his chief cameraman, **Jean Leherissey**, this film may well prove outstanding. For purely idealistic reasons Raymond-Millet is so anxious for it to be shown abroad that he would consider, even, exchanging it with a picture of similar length to be distributed in France.

The other film, which has already been shown in Paris (and also recently at the *Semaine du Cinéma* at Cannes) is *La vie dramatique de Maurice Utrillo*. The script of this fascinating biography was written by the French writer **Roland Dorgeles**, who follows the painter's life very closely as a contemporary and a friend. The life story of an artist still among the living has not often been brought to the screen, and the fact that in the last scenes **Utrillo** plays his own part will be an added attraction for the public at large. (Utrillo in his youth is played by **Jean Vinci**, an actor bearing striking resemblance to him.) Another remarkable feature of the film is that it does not gloss over the painter's alcoholic bouts, which once scandalised society, and follows him even into the Institution where he spent long periods of enforced idleness. Utrillo himself expressed approval of this absolute frankness, and discouraged any attempt at "glamourising". It goes without saying that most of his pictures will be seen in the film—not in a museum-like long panning shot, but as an integral part of his life and work. This is the first picture of a



"*La Montagne est verte*".

series of thirteen planned by the production company *Télé-Cinéma*, all of them devoted to lives of important modern painters.

In Wardour Street one hears continually that there is no public at all for this kind of picture. Those who, fifteen or twenty years ago, used the same argument with regard to classical music have in the meantime suffered a notable defeat at the hands of a steadily growing concert public. As for films, nothing can be proved so long as there is no opportunity for a try-out apart from occasional runs in comparatively expensive specialised cinemas. In Paris, on the other hand, experimental cinemas concentrating on unconventional programmes have sprung up in various districts: some of them at least seem to fare well—mostly, it is true, on one evening performance only, while trade-shows and so on fill the screen in daytime.

Such a "Cinéma d'Essai" has recently been opened in the Avenue des Ternes under the auspices of the French Cinema Critics Association. It changes its programme every week, and here is a fair sample of one: *The Dark Past* (full-length feature), Flaherty's *Nanook*, Lo Duca's *L'Oeuvre de Louis Lumière*, *Les Petits Mystères de Paris* (an experimental short by Pierre Gant and Jean Thevenot), and finally a Polish scientific film. Its feature films range from revivals, such as *The Magnificent Ambersons*, to new films such as the Italian *In the Name of the Law*.

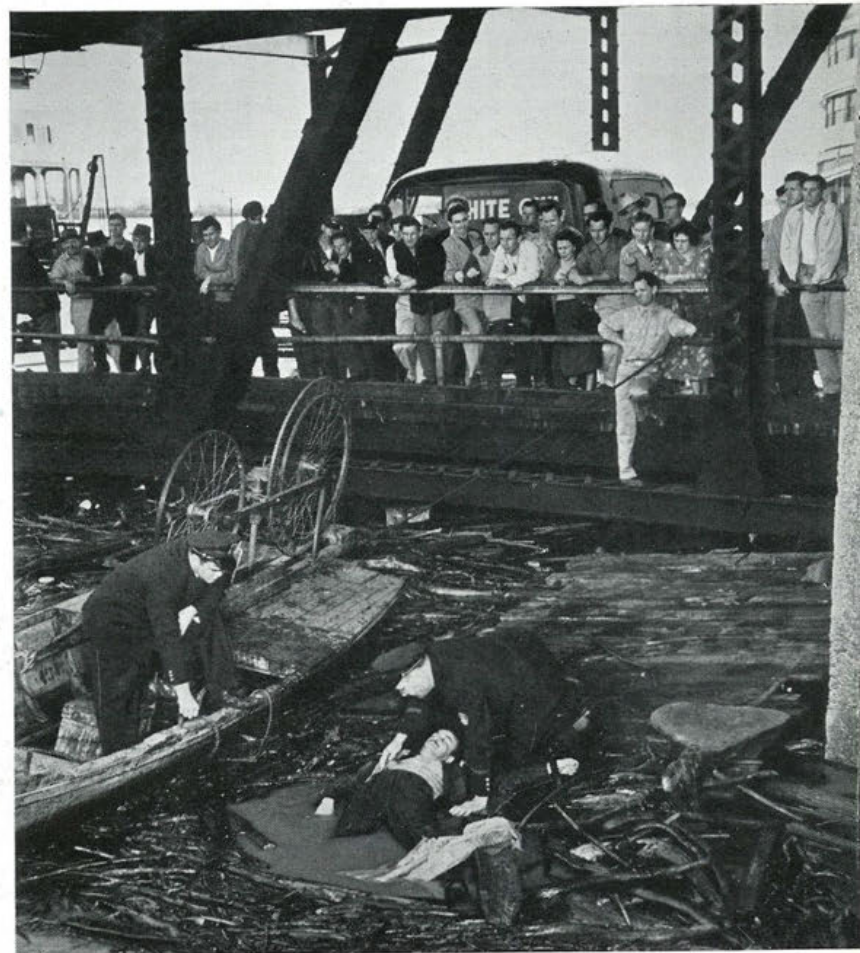
A programme of nearly three hours, as one can see, and not a dull one to those whose idea of entertainment is not completely hidebound. Is their number really so insignificant in London that an "Experimental Cinema" would have to finish in a bankruptcy court?

FRANCIS KOVAL.



Above: Elia Kazan's new film, Panic In the Streets, was shot mainly on location in New Orleans: it is a melodrama played against a background of a city threatened with an outbreak of plague. Several minor characters, such as the dwarf news vendor above, were chosen on the spot. Leading players are Richard Widmark and Barbara Bel Geddes.

Below: The Men is directed by Fred Zinneman, who made The Search, and deals with the rehabilitation of army veterans physically and psychologically shattered. This picture shows Jack Webb and (close to camera) Marlon Brando—who played Steve in Streetcar Named Desire on Broadway—in his first film part as the paralysed central character of the film.



The Men

HOLLYWOOD

THE LAW of Hollywood, more and more, seems to be that a picture needs at least three versions before it comes to be appreciated. It begins to appear that what the really popular movies do for the great public's unease—unfamiliarity, not knowing for sure whether it is to be laughed at or not, whether they mean what is said or the opposite—is to offer the thing that was baffling in its first, second and third incarnations for a fourth, fifth and sixth time. So that by the time **Clifton Webb**, as Belvedere, comes out as Hollywood's Man Who Came to Dinner and then rolls this into *Cheaper by the Dozen*—Hollywood's third rewrite of Father from *Life with Father* and other period pieces which Broadway and itself have been doing for the last few years—there can be not much question as to how it should be taken. Thus, the **Robert Rossen** prize-winning film *All the King's Men* was really its less easily assimilable predecessors, *Citizen Kane* and/or Preston Sturges' *The Great McGinty*. And perhaps Hollywood, as some of our analysts would probably have it, was also rewarding the social impulse in films generally, and through the Rossen film was paying secret tribute to the Negro cycle as well.

Red Skelton, whom M.G.M. seems to give to every new director or producer to begin with—like short versions of Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart*—stars in dance-director **Jack Donohue's** first real feature for a major studio, *The Yellow Cab Man*. Tipping off the silent film quality of the comedy, if not the general quality of a film of incredible crudeness for most of the first part, is the name of **Edward Sedgwick** listed in the credits as Comedy Consultant: Sedgwick being an old-time silent comedy director. Producer on the film is **Richard Goldstone**, who did *The Set-Up* at R.K.O. and has also done *The Outriders* at Metro. The film contains a burlesque psycho-analytical sequence of genuine comic inspiration; and it is notable, too, for having had sense enough to make use of the talents of the eccentric photographer, **Weegee**, whose latest field of experiment, distortion through trick lens work, is very pleasingly and appropriately employed in a fantasy sequence featuring stretched-out taxicabs.

Weegee, a New York crime photographer and author of the news-photo book, "The Naked City", is a kind of primitive avant-gardist who does a wonderful Will Rogers-style commentary in person while showing his still photographs and by way of introduction to his films; though his films so far have not caught much of that quality, except for his New York material at Coney Island. He has impudence as a comic ingredient and has a genuine kind of pathos; he has the ability to spot and catch photographically the touchingly human in us, in a way that I think of in connection with few American film workers. Hollywood is the world's most wonderful toy to him. He played a small part, a timekeeper, in *The Set-Up*.

Skelton did two pictures, *The Show-Off* by **George Kelly** and a remake of *Merton of the Movies* (produced by another novice producer, **Albert Lewis**, who served a four-year

apprenticeship in **Arthur Freed's** office at Metro. *Merton* also represented dance-director **Robert Alton's** directorial first): these two little comedies I liked very much and have never seen praised. **Hugo Haas**, a Czech émigré film and theatre actor and director, who will, some day, do a Barry Fitzgerald in the movies, did very nicely with a silent film director's role in *Merton*, achieving distinct burlesque but not letting it get out of hand.

We have not seen The Revuers' work since they were on the edge of amateurdom, and so do not know just how fresh *On the Town* (written by **Adolph Green** and **Betty Comden**, two of the five Revuers, based on an idea by **Jerome Robbins**, who did the choreography) was as a Broadway enterprise. Their work had a quality which was undeniable down at the little Village Vanguard, when the mere idea of song and dance take-off's on current magazines was appealing, and the slight roughness at the edges was good too. But the filmed *On the Town* (screenplay by Adolph Green and Betty Comden from their musical play) struck me as disastrously literal, in Hollywood's worst tradition of literalising the free fantastic. And on the basis of **Gene Kelly's** directorial work on *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* (called *Everybody's Cheering* in England), I am inclined to put a great deal of the blame on his shoulders. The Kelly bubble has not grown more iridescent in the last year or two. He was at his very best in the little hopscotch dance in *Living in a Big Way*, and though his efforts have become more and more ambitious, nothing has quite equalled that for spontaneous invention. He was over-rich in *The Pirate*, as was the whole film, and the Fairbanksism, while superior to Fairbanks Junior's, was oppressive. The filmed *On the Town*, it seems to me, had almost nothing of the brilliant qualities that Jerome Robbins' "At the Beach" ballet from the musical *High Button Shoes* would lead you to expect. Compared with the best in Metro's tradition of this kind, *Meet Me In St. Louis*, *On the Town* seemed way off-beat. The promise that Kelly offered of a filmic dance style as, say, suggested in **Maya Deren's** one interesting sequence in *A Study in Choreography for Camera* (1945), with Talley Beatty, he has done fairly little with: generally, he has fallen victim to the facility which the perfectionist craftsmanship of an Astaire, by his very personality, would be unable to accept.

Arthur Freed, in what we hope turns out to be more than bait for the columnists, has announced his intention of doing a musical of *Huckleberry Finn*. We note that **Kurt Weill** was engaged on a stage version with music of the same classic (for the Playwrights Company) at the time of his death. The Freed *Huck Finn* must, anyhow, wait for at least three more current enterprises launched from his office: the most current of which is an unpretentious little something working under the title of *Pagan Love Song*, whose company has already been to Hawaii and back, and which has dance director **Robert Alton** (*Merton of the Movies*) at his second fling.

HAROLD LEONARD.



The Seventh Art



Coming out from a movie house, Rosendo Vargas, 18, and his brother Juan, 20, discussed whether the protagonist in *White Cargo* was a virtuous or a fickle woman. Rosendo argued for virtue and Juan took the opposite view. Tempers flared and words led to acts.

The youths drew knives and slashed each other until exhausted. Both died later in hospital. (*Los Angeles Daily News*.)



All the King's Men. Well acted. They just didn't come out again as they do not want to know the truth about crooked politicians. Weather excellent. (Showman's Report in *Motion Picture Herald*.)



A beautiful English country garden, with lawns, fresh flowers and fruit trees in full blossom, has arrived at Elstree studios by road. The garden was transplanted from its normal location in Woking, Surrey, to provide the background for a love scene between Gregory Peck and Virginia Mayo in *Captain Horatio Hornblower*, now being filmed as a Warner Bros. First National production.

Man responsible for uprooting earth, grass, trees and bushes and moving them forty miles across country was Art Director Tom Morahan, who did the whole job inside two days . . . 800 daffodils, 1,500 tulips and hyacinths in full bloom and many other kinds of flowers arrived at Elstree together with 60 almond, peach and cherry trees. Several large yews, evergreen oaks and weeping willows completed the effect. Four tons of earth and 18 hundredweights of peat provided a planting ground for the flowers and foliage, and 600 square yards of turf were laid down for the lawns.

When Virginia Mayo walked on to the "English Garden" set, it took her breath away. "If only", she said, "I could have something like this at home". (*Publicity handout*.)



An attack on Ingrid Bergman ended a demand in the Senate to-day for a system of government licensing for film actors, actresses, producers, and for pictures. The demand came from Colorado's Senator, Edwin Johnson, who exclaimed: "Rita Hayworth got herself involved in a triangle and ended up with a new baby and the title of Princess. Now she is being courted by American producers who want to make the most of her spectacular experience".

Senator Johnson then turned on Miss Bergman, describing her as his favourite actress of all time.

"You cannot help feeling", he said, "that her sudden plunge from the pinnacle of respect to the gutter to which she has dropped is the result of some hypnotic influence . . . When a homewrecker like Rossellini gets caught redhanded in a bedroom raid of this kind and gets himself shot like the dog he is, the unwritten law in America usually turns the slayer loose with a generous pat on the back. That is what we here think of such degenerates". (*Daily Express*.)



When making tea—she always boils it!—she (Eileen Herlie) is a strange, warm, unsophisticated girl who wistfully loves the earth—earthy things and the colourful people who struggle and suffer. (*Focus, Catholic Film Institute Organ*.)

Beryl Baxter is a girl who was literally whipped off the screen. Perhaps you remember *The Idol of Paris*, in which Beryl had her first and only star part? The big scene was a duel, with stockwhips, between Beryl and Christine Norden. That was two years ago. And ever since then Beryl Baxter has been unable to get a single day's work from a film studio.

Now Beryl realises that the shocking duel scene was a calamity in her acting life. ". . . What a fool I was to allow myself to be used in such a freak and sadistic part", she told me yesterday. "When the film failed—as it deserved to—I couldn't get a job. Everyone I approached turned me down. They didn't say so, but I know they regarded me as just a freak actress . . . It just doesn't pay to be branded as a freak". (*The People*.)



"I want to play a dramatic role, something like the part played by Micheline Presle in *Le Diable au Corps*". Patricia Roc.



A £400,000 film production, in colour, of Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* at Elstree studios, has been postponed because neither Sir Laurence Olivier nor Errol Flynn can play the part. (*Daily Express*.)



Sweat, blood and toil typifies the campaign of W. G. Thomas, of the Odeon, Sketty, Swansea, who was determined to make the biggest Welsh sign ever for *Hamlet*. He obtained 35 old banners from HO publicity, and these were cut out in the car park to make the letters of the title.

Then, in his own words, "The letters were taken to a mountain side that had previously been selected as the best vantage point. A lorry conveyed the banners as far up the mountain as possible but a stiff climb remained".

The 44-ft. tall letters were spread at 10-ft. intervals, and the sign was visible from the whole area, including the docks. Thomas goes on to say: "It will be appreciated that a great amount of tedious work went into the making of the sign and the physical strain of climbing the mountain, but the result was gratifying". That is spoken like a true showman. (*Kinematograph Weekly*.)



The reverse of the industry slogan, *Movies are Better than Ever*, is the belief that in some quaint manner, the old-time movies are more to be desired. Believe us, they are not. We booked and played most of the historic films in their day and nothing is more depressing than to view them now, with the feeling of how inadequate and incompetent they were, measured by present-day standards.

There is a "lost audience" who relish the old films, and truly they are lost, since it has become rather fashionable, in certain circles, to dwell on ancient films, and proclaim them as superior. Such sources are basic opposition to the belief that *The Movies are Better than Ever* . . .

You'll find the propaganda slant, aimed at present-day movies, which originates with the libraries and sources engaged in peddling old films for profit. Some things acquire value through age—old wine, old furniture, old houses, old friends. But there's none of this quality in antique films. The public is getting old films on television. Let them observe the difference . . . (Editorial in *Motion Picture Herald*.)

OSCAR NIGHT IN HOLLYWOOD

Raymond Chandler

Right: Olivia de Havilland, Oscar for 1949 for "The Heiress". Below: Sydney Greenstreet and Ingrid Bergman in "Casablanca" (Academy Award, 1943), and Fredric March (Oscar, 1932) as "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde".



FIVE OR SIX years ago a distinguished writer-director (if I may be permitted the epithet in connection with a Hollywood personage) was co-author of a screen play nominated for an Academy Award. He was too nervous to attend the proceedings on the big night, so he was listening to a broadcast at home, pacing the floor tensely, chewing his fingers, taking long breaths, scowling and debating with himself in hoarse whispers whether to stick it out until the Oscars were announced, or turn the damned radio off and read about it in the papers the next morning. Getting a little tired of all this artistic temperament in the home, his wife suddenly came up with one of those awful remarks which achieve a wry immortality in Hollywood: "For Pete's sake, don't take it so seriously, darling. After all, Luise Rainer won it twice".

To those who did not see the famous telephone scene in *The Great Ziegfeld*, or any of the subsequent versions of it which Miss Rainer played in other pictures, with and without telephone, this remark will lack punch. To

others it will serve as well as anything to express that cynical despair with which Hollywood people regard their own highest distinction. It isn't so much that the awards never go to the fine achievements as that those fine achievements are not rewarded as such. They are rewarded as fine achievements in box office hits. You can't be an All-American on a losing team. Technically, they are voted, but actually they are not decided by the use of whatever artistic and critical wisdom Hollywood may happen to possess. They are ballyhooed, pushed, yelled, screamed, and in every way propagandised into the consciousness of the voters so incessantly, in the weeks before the final balloting, that everything except the golden aura of the box office is forgotten.

The Motion Picture Academy, at considerable expense and with great efficiency, runs all the nominated pictures at its own theatre, showing each picture twice, once in the afternoon and once in the evening. A nominated picture is one in connection with which any kind of work is

nominated for an award, not necessarily acting, directing, or writing; it may be a purely technical matter such as set-dressing or sound work. This running of pictures has the object of permitting voters to look at films which they may happen to have missed or to have partly forgotten. It is an attempt to make them realise that pictures released early in the year and since overlaid with several thicknesses of battered celluloid, are still in the running and that consideration of only those released a short time before the end of the year is not quite just.

The effort is largely a waste. The people with the votes don't go to these showings. They send their relatives, friends, or servants. They have had enough of looking at pictures, and the voices of destiny are by no means inaudible in the Hollywood air. They have a brassy tone, but they are more than distinct.

All this is good democracy of a sort. We elect Congressmen and Presidents in much the same way, so why not actors, cameramen, writers, and all the rest of the people who have to do with the making of pictures? If we permit noise, ballyhoo, and bad theatre to influence us in the selection of the people who are to run the country, why should we object to the same methods in the selection of meritorious achievement in the film business? If we can huckster a President into the White House, why cannot we huckster the agonised Miss Joan Crawford or the hard and beautiful Miss Olivia de Havilland into possession of one of those golden statuettes which express the motion picture industry's frantic desire to kiss itself on the back of the neck? The only answer I can think of is that the motion picture is an art. I say this with a very small voice. It is an inconsiderable statement and has a hard time not sounding a little ludicrous. Nevertheless, it is a fact, not in the least diminished by the further fact that its ethos is so far pretty low and that its techniques are dominated by some pretty awful people.

If you think most motion pictures are bad, which they are (including the foreign), find out from some initiate how they are made, and you will be astonished that any of them could be good. Making a fine motion picture is like painting "The Laughing Cavalier" in Macy's basement, with a floorwalker to mix your colours for you. Of course, most motion pictures are bad. Why wouldn't they be? Apart from its own intrinsic handicaps of excessive cost, hypercritical bluenosed censorship, and the lack of any single-minded controlling force in the making, the motion picture is bad because 90 per cent. is a little too virile and plain-spoken for the putty-minded clerics, the elderly ingenues of the women's clubs, and the tender guardians of that godawful mixture of boredom and bad manners known more eloquently as the Impressionable Age.

The point is not whether there are bad motion pictures or even whether the average motion picture is bad, but whether the motion picture is an artistic medium of sufficient dignity and accomplishment to be treated with respect by the people who control its destinies. Those who deride the motion picture usually are satisfied that they have thrown the book at it by declaring it to be a form of mass entertainment. As if that meant anything. Greek drama, which is still considered quite respectable by most intellectuals, was mass entertainment to the Athenian free-man. So, within its economic and topographical limits, was the Elizabethan drama. The great cathedrals of Europe, although not exactly built to while away an afternoon, certainly had an æsthetic and spiritual effect on the ordin-

ary man. To-day, if not always, the fugues and chorales of Bach, the symphonies of Mozart, Borodin, and Brahms, the violin concertos of Vivaldi, the piano sonatas of Scarlatti, and a great deal of what was once rather recondite music are mass entertainment by virtue of radio. Not all fools love it, but not all fools love anything more literate than a comic strip. It might reasonably be said that all art at some time and in some manner becomes mass entertainment, and that if it does not it dies and is forgotten.

The motion picture admittedly is faced with too large a mass; it must please too many people and offend too few, the second of these restrictions being infinitely more damaging to it artistically than the first. The people who sneer at the motion picture as an art form are furthermore seldom willing to consider it at its best. They insist upon judging it by the picture they saw last week or yesterday; which is even more absurd (in view of the sheer quantity of production) than to judge literature by last week's ten best sellers, or the dramatic art by even the best of the current Broadway hits. In a novel you can still say what you like, and the stage is free almost to the point of obscenity, but the motion picture made in Hollywood, if it is to create art at all, must do so within such strangling limitations of subject and treatment that it is a blind wonder it ever achieves any distinction beyond the purely mechanical slickness of a glass and chromium bathroom. If it were merely a transplanted literary or dramatic art, it certainly would not. The hucksters and the bluenoses between them would see to that.

But the motion picture is *not* a transplanted literary or dramatic art, any more than it is a plastic art. It has elements of all these, but in its essential structure it is much closer to music, in the sense that its finest effects can be independent of precise meaning, that its transitions can be more eloquent than its high-lit scenes, and that its dissolves and camera movements, which cannot be censored, are often far more emotionally effective than its plots, which can. Not only is the motion picture an art, but it is the one entirely new art that has been evolved on this planet for hundreds of years. It is the only art at which we of this generation have any possible chance to greatly excel.

In painting, music, and architecture we are not even second-rate by comparison with the best work of the past. In sculpture we are just funny. In prose literature we not only lack style but we lack the educational and historical background to know what style is. Our fiction and drama are adept, empty, often intriguing, and so mechanical that in another fifty years at most they will be produced by machines with rows of push buttons. We have no popular poetry in the grand style, merely delicate or witty or bitter or obscure verses. Our novels are transient propaganda when they are what is called "significant," and bedtime reading when they are not.

But in the motion picture we possess an art medium whose glories are not all behind us. It has already produced great work, and if, comparatively and proportionately, far too little of that great work has been achieved in Hollywood, I think that is all the more reason why in its annual tribal dance of the stars and the big-shot producers Hollywood should contrive a little quiet awareness of the fact. Of course it won't. I'm just daydreaming.

Show business has always been a little overnoisy, overdressed, overbrash. Actors are threatened people. Before films came along to make them rich they often had need of a desperate gaiety. Some of these qualities prolonged



Twenty years of Oscars: a brief selection. Greta Garbo (who has never won an award) and John Barrymore in Edmund Goulding's "Grand Hotel" (Academy Award, 1932), and Claudette Colbert, Clark Gable in Capra's "It Happened One Night" (1934, Oscars for film and both principals).

beyond a strict necessity have passed into the Hollywood mores and produced that very exhausting thing, the Hollywood manner, which is a chronic case of spurious excitement over absolutely nothing. Nevertheless, and for once in a lifetime, I have to admit that Academy Awards night is a good show and quite funny in spots, although I'll admire you if you can laugh at all of it.

If you can go past those awful idiot faces on the bleachers outside the theatre without a sense of the collapse of the human intelligence; if you can stand the hailstorm of flash bulbs popping at the poor patient actors who, like kings

and queens, have never the right to look bored; if you can glance out over the gathered assemblage of what is supposed to be the elite of Hollywood and say to yourself without a sinking feeling, "In these hands lie the destinies of the only original art the modern world has conceived"; if you can laugh, and you probably will, at the cast-off jokes from the comedians on the stage, stuff that wasn't good enough to use on their radio shows; if you can stand the fake sentimentality and the platitudes of the officials and the mincing elocution of the glamour queens (you ought to hear them with four martinis down the hatch);



Greer Garson and Henry Travers in Wyler's "Mrs. Miniver" (Oscar, 1942), and Ray Milland in Wilder's "Lost Weekend" (Oscar for film and star, 1945). Capra and Ford have been thrice Oscared: Wyler, Milestone, Borzage, Frank Lloyd, Leo McCarey, twice.



if you can do all these things with grace and pleasure, and not have a wild and forsaken horror at the thought that most of these people actually take this shoddy performance seriously; and if you can then go out into the night to see half the police force of Los Angeles gathered to protect the golden ones from the mob in the free seats but not from that awful moaning sound they give out, like destiny whistling through a hollow shell; if you can do all these things and still feel next morning that the picture business is worth the attention of one single intelligent, artistic mind, then in the picture business you certainly belong, because this sort of vulgarity is part of its inevitable price.

Glancing over the programme of the Awards before the show starts, one is apt to forget that this is really an actors', directors', and big-shot producers' rodeo. It is for the people who *make* pictures (they think), not just for the people who work on them. But these gaudy characters are a kindly bunch at heart: they know that a lot of small-fry characters in minor technical jobs, such as cameramen, musicians, cutters, writers, soundmen, and the inventors of new equipment, have to be given something to amuse them and make them feel mildly elated. So the performance was formerly divided into two parts, with an intermission. On the occasion I attended, however, one of the Masters of Ceremony (I forget which—there was a steady stream of them, like bus passengers) announced that there would be no intermission this year and that they would proceed immediately to the *important* part of the programme.

Let me repeat, the *important* part of the programme.

Perverse fellow that I am, I found myself intrigued by the unimportant part of the programme also. I found my sympathies engaged by the lesser ingredients of picture-making, some of which have been enumerated above. I was intrigued by the efficiently quick on-and-off that was given to these minnows of the picture business; by their nervous attempts via the microphone to give most of the credit for their work to some stuffed shirt in a corner office; by the fact that technical developments which may mean millions of dollars to the industry, and may on occasion influence the whole procedure of picture-making, are just not worth explaining to the audience at all; by the casual, cavalier treatment given to film-editing and to camera work, two of the essential arts of film-making, almost and sometimes quite equal to direction, and much more important than all but the very best acting; intrigued most of all, perhaps, by the formal tribute which is invariably made to the importance of the writer, without whom, my dear, dear friends, nothing could be done at all, but who is for all that merely the climax of the *unimportant* part of the programme.

I am also intrigued by the voting. It was formerly done by all the members of all the various guilds, including the extras and the bit players. Then it was realised that this gave too much voting power to rather unimportant groups, so the voting on various classes of awards was restricted to the guilds which were presumed to have some critical intelligence on the subject. Evidently this did not work either, and the next change was to have the nominating done by the specialist guilds, and the final voting only by the members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

It doesn't really seem to make much difference how the voting is done. The quality of the work is still only recognised in the context of success. A superb job in a flop picture would get you nothing, a

More Oscars: Katharine Hepburn for "Morning Glory" (1933); Paul Muni for "Louis Pasteur" (1936); Luise Rainer (repetition of telephone scene in "The Great Ziegfeld"?) for "The Good Earth" (1937). Rainer, Bette Davis and Olivia de Havilland are only actresses twice Oscarred; Fredric March, Spencer Tracy, only actors.

routine job in a winner will be voted in. It is against this background of success-worship that the voting is done, with the incidental music supplied by a stream of advertising in the trade papers (which even intelligent people read in Hollywood) designed to put all other pictures than those advertised out of your head at balloting time. The psychological effect is very great on minds conditioned to thinking of merit solely in terms of box office and ballyhoo. The members of the Academy live in this atmosphere, and they are enormously suggestible people, as are all workers in Hollywood. If they are contracted to studios, they are made to feel that it is a matter of group patriotism to vote for the products of their own lot. They are informally advised not to waste their votes, not to plump for something that can't win, especially something made on another lot.

I do not feel any profound conviction, for example, as to whether *The Best Years of Our Lives* was even the best Hollywood motion picture of 1946. It depends what you mean by best. It had a first-class director, some fine actors, and the most appealing sympathy gag in years. It probably had as much all-round distinction as Hollywood is presently capable of. That it had the kind of clean and simple art possessed by *Open City* or the stalwart and magnificent impact of *Henry V* only an idiot would claim. In a sense it did not have art at all. It had that kind of sentimentality which is almost but not quite humanity, and that kind of adeptness which is almost but not quite style. And it had them in large doses, which always helps.

The governing board of the Academy is at great pains to protect the honesty and secrecy of the voting. It is done by anonymous numbered ballots, and the ballots are sent, not to any agency of the motion picture industry, but to a well-known firm of public accountants. The results, in sealed envelopes, are borne by an emissary of the firm right on to the stage of the theatre where the Awards are to be made, and there for the first time, they are made known. Surely precaution could go no further. No one could possibly have known in advance any of these results, not even in Hollywood where every agent learns the closely guarded secrets of the studios with no apparent trouble. If there are secrets in Hollywood, which I sometimes doubt, this voting ought to be one of them.

As for a deeper kind of honesty, I think it is about time for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to use a little of it up by declaring in a forthright manner that foreign pictures are outside competition and will remain so until they face the same economic situation and the same strangling censorship that Hollywood faces. It is all very well to say how clever and artistic the French are, how true to life, what subtle actors they have, what an honest sense of the earth, what forthrightness in dealing with the bawdy side of life. The French can afford these things, we cannot. To the Italians they are permitted, to us they are denied. Even the English possess a freedom we lack. How much did *Brief Encounter* cost? It would have cost at least a million and a half in Hollywood; in order to get that money back, and the distribution costs on top of the negative costs, it would have had to contain innumerable crowd-pleasing ingredients, the very lack of which is what makes it a good picture.

Since the Academy is not an International tribunal of film art it should stop pretending to be one. If foreign pictures have no practical chance whatsoever of winning a major award they should not be nominated. At the very beginning of the performance in 1947 a special Oscar was

awarded to Laurence Olivier for *Henry V*, although it was among those nominated as the best picture of the year. There could be no more obvious way of saying that it was not going to win. A couple of minor technical awards and a couple of minor writing awards were also given to foreign pictures, but nothing that ran into important coin, just side meat. Whether these awards were deserved is beside the point, which is that they were minor awards and were intended to be minor awards, and that there was no possibility whatsoever of any foreign-made picture winning a major award.

To outsiders it might appear that something devious went on here. To those who know Hollywood, all that went on was the secure knowledge and awareness that the Oscars exist for and by Hollywood, their standards and problems are the standards and problems of Hollywood, their purpose is to maintain the supremacy of Hollywood, and their phoniness is the phoniness of Hollywood. But the Academy cannot, without appearing ridiculous, maintain the pose of internationalism by tossing a few minor baubles to the foreigners while carefully keeping all the top drawer jewellery for itself. As a writer I resent that writing awards should be among the baubles, and as a member of the Motion Picture Academy I resent its trying to put itself in a position which its annual performance before the public shows it is quite unfit to occupy.

If the actors and actresses like the silly show, and I'm not sure at all the best of them do, they at least know how to look elegant in a strong light, and how to make with the wide-eyed and oh, so humble little speeches as if they believed them. If the big producers like it, and I'm quite sure they do because it contains the only ingredients they really understand—promotion values and the additional grosses that go with them—the producers at least know what they are fighting for. But if the quiet, earnest, and slightly cynical people who really make motion pictures like it, and I'm quite sure they don't, well, after all, it comes only once a year, and it's no worse than a lot of the sleazy vaudeville they have to push out of the way to get their work done.

Of course, that's not quite the point either. The head of a large studio once said privately that in his candid opinion the motion picture business was 25 per cent. honest business and the other 75 per cent. pure conniving. He didn't say anything about art, although he may have heard of it. But that *is* the real point, isn't it?—whether these annual Awards regardless of the grotesque ritual that accompanies them, really represent anything at all of artistic importance to the motion picture medium, anything clear and honest that remains after the lights are dimmed, the minks put away, and the aspirin is swallowed? I don't think they do. I think they are just theatre and not even good theatre. As for the personal prestige that goes with winning an Oscar, it may with luck last long enough for your agent to get your contract re-written and your price jacked up another notch. But over the years and in the hearts of men of good will? I hardly think so.

Once upon a time a once very successful Hollywood lady decided (or was forced) to sell her lovely furnishings at auction, together with her lovely home. On the day before she moved out she was showing a party of her friends through the house for a private view. One of them noticed that the lady was using her two golden Oscars as doorstops. It seemed they were just about the right weight, and she had sort of forgotten they were gold.

A NOTE ON FILM DIRECTION

Bernard Miles

IT SEEMS TO ME that what makes the director's job very difficult is that a film is composed of two different raw materials, subject to two different sets of laws. First, the film, and second, the actors. By actors I mean human beings pretending to be other human beings, according to the particular and subtle laws of make-believe. Being human, actors are subject to error. They have minds and ideas of their own, and have to be carefully watched the whole time. Whatever you may say about handling pieces of film, you don't have to keep an eye on them to prevent them doing something while you're not looking.

It is one thing to know a lot about human beings and a lot about the people in your story and how they are supposed to behave, but quite another to know how to get actors to behave precisely in the way required—i.e., how to translate a knowledge of human beings and their behaviour into the very specialised terms of acting. It seems to me that only a practical acquaintance with the technique of acting can serve. And in my view this is every bit as important as knowledge of editing and film construction generally. A "beautifully made" film, "shot for cutting", can be a very poor affair if the acting inside it is dull and flat and lifeless: for the average audience, I feel sure, much duller than a well-acted film badly shot. The complete film director must therefore have two techniques at his fingertips—the technique of film construction and the technique of acting. He must know how to make pieces of film behave, and how to make actors behave. The "cutter-director" knows the general movement he desires ("the way the film goes") and also how to achieve it. He may also understand the general behaviour of the people in the story. But he has no idea how to render that general behaviour in terms of acting symbols. How can he have? Acting is at least as complex a craft as film editing, and takes as long to learn. The "actor-director" knows the

general behaviour of the characters and how to translate that behaviour into terms of acting. He also understands the general movement of the film, "the way the story goes". But he has no idea how to translate this into terms of detailed film construction, because he in his turn has received no groundwork in the complex craft of film editing.

Of course, the "cutter-director" can always draw upon the technique of the actors present, just as the "actor-director" can always call upon the technical knowledge of his cameraman, operator, continuity girl, and so on.

If the film is really well acted in the sense of heightened human behaviour, this can carry a great proportion of the excitement. If the editing construction of the picture is powerful and fast and right in tempo, *that* will carry a great proportion of the excitement. The greatest films contain both sorts of excitement. They build their story truly and excitingly in terms of two techniques fully mastered: acting and film technique.

Obviously, in the end the two materials and the two techniques are inseparable, but my own view is that the chief problem for the director is to go on believing intensely in the story he is making in the midst of all the technical paraphernalia which surrounds him, to fill the story with life as well as with technique, and to communicate his own warmth and enthusiasm to the actors.

I think the reason *Chance of a Lifetime* (to take a recent example!) is so well acted and so well cut is that the actor-director divided the labours of direction with a very skilled cutter-director (Alan Osbiston). In my view, this is the only way to work, and I trust that when Alan Osbiston comes to direct his own film (as he surely will), he will take the same precaution against shipwreck as I did, by employing a skilful actor-director to sit by his side. I even hope he may choose me.

With this issue SIGHT & SOUND drops its price to 1/6. We are especially pleased to do this, for many people have remarked that 2/6 for a monthly is a strain on this dollar-less continent, and we believe that the new price will put the magazine comfortably within the range of those who have previously found it too expensive. We would like modestly to point out that is in part a public-spirited gesture, for the cost of magazine production is very high these days; we have had to lose eight pages, but if the response justifies this move we shall certainly restore them. So we hope that everybody interested in the cinema will buy the magazine, will recommend it to others, will even consider a subscription to it a worthy present, and in general do all they can to help us establish an honest, comprehensive, reasonably-priced monthly film review. Critics have been kind, and have said that the cinema needs SIGHT & SOUND: this is an encouraging thought, but SIGHT & SOUND needs its public too.

Films of the Month

ALL THE KING'S MEN

Richard Winnington



"All the King's Men". Death of a tyrant: Broderick Crawford.

RECENTLY a colleague of long and serious standing in weekly film criticism opined, with no evidence of ironic inflexion, that the film critic should as far as possible avoid reading books from which films are likely to be made. Previous knowledge of a book prohibits an open-minded approach to the adaption. The film, she contended, must not be regarded as a transcription or a translation, but as a separate work suggested or inspired by, but owing no more dues to, the original than the adaptors considered proper within the bounds of their purpose or intention. The argument indicates defeatism or critics' *cafard*. For in a sense, a good deal of contemporary fiction would not be cast in the form it is without the existence of the cinema either as an influence or as the most valuable market. And nothing in past literature having any immunity, it is clear that the film critic cannot be inviolate in the sense demanded by the argument.

The nearly verbatim film transcription of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *All the King's Men*, is one of those cases which might seem to give a kind of inverted support

to my colleague's whimsical contention. So closely does Robert Rossen follow the outlines of the original that one's own knowledge of it automatically performs the service of filling up Rossen's serious holes in dramatic logic and character construction. For Rossen hasn't even tried to create something different yet true in another medium. He has attempted a literal illustration of the novel by violent pictorial means and he has put in too much and too little.

This is not to say the novel is a great or significant contribution to American literature. But it at least fulfils the purpose of showing us Willie Stark beginning with the megalomaniac sincerity of his kind and *gradually* becoming corrupted by power. Whereas the film takes him in abrupt illogical transitions from suspect hick tub-thumper to conventional Hollywood political-gangster. And the novel is only secondarily a version of the rise and fall of a demagogue based on the late Governor Huey Long. Primarily, it is the saga of the lost whisky-swilling American near-intellectual (Jack Burden) from Charles Jackson out of



Scott Fitzgerald. Bugged in Southern decay and self-hatred, Burden becomes the willing stooge of Stark in his destructive campaign against his (Burden's) friends and class. A complicated network of motives, relationships and conflicts forms the structure of Robert Penn Warren's cinematically conceived novel.

By including all these Burden's Landing figures in tabloid form without tracing their roots, Rossen has sacrificed the vital element of conflict. They are a sorry lot but they supply the only "democratic" opposition to the totalitarian ethics of Stark, aside from some vague undefined citizens' committees. Stark (Broderick Crawford) dominates the album of disconnected snapshots but he cannot be said to have any more body than the others and Rossen's failure to articulate him is a failure in the primary creative uses of the screen. It is not for us to indicate by what stressing of suggestive or selective detail Stark could have been warmed to life and integrated. But let *All the King's Men* be compared with Nicholas Ray's less spectacular and less acclaimed *They Live By Night*. Even the most minor character in this sensitive adaption of Edward Anderson's minor classic "Thieves Like Us" fits into the whole design and manages to suggest full individuality.

Such arts being absent from *All the King's Men* it emerges as the melodramatic story of a strong-arm politician brought down by the neurotic idealistic doctor (Shepherd Strudwick) less because he had violated all the democratic decencies and destroyed the revered Judge Stanton (Ray-

(Continued on page 168)



"All the King's Men". Top left: A location scene, with Broderick Crawford, Mercedes McCambridge, John Ireland. Below: One of the crowd scenes at the end of the film.

JOUR DE FÊTE

Jean Quéval

INTO THE VILLAGE bathed in early morning sunshine comes the travelling fair. Out of the slowly moving caravan peep the heads of wooden horses. A little boy runs out from a farm to skip behind the procession, which comes eventually to a standstill in the main square. The fairground folk begin to erect their pole, their shooting range stands, "try your skill" stalls, a primitive cinema and, of course, the inevitable merry-go-round with its musical box repertoire of popular numbers. These fairground folk are genuine Parisian "Titis", the very counterparts of Cockneys. They have a sharp eye, a friendly and occasionally callous sense of humour, a happy-go-lucky outlook, and they make malicious private jokes. They are played *au naturel* by circus people. On the main square stands the café where the villagers, in high spirits, are beginning to gather. These are not "acted"—they really are the village folk of Sainte Sévère, Indre-et-Loire. The background is set, and it is as accurate and telling as any documentary's. This is, however, a feature film—though the narrative is as thin as it conceivably can be. There is some slight indication that a sentimental affair might develop between the young man of the fair and one of the local girls, much to the annoyance of the former's wife. But this remains tentative, and brings little weight to bear on the essential material. There is no story as stories go, and there would be no film were it not for the postman.

He is the film. Six foot five in his stockinged feet, dark and bony and clumsy, he wears a shabby uniform with sleeves and trousers a few inches too short. In this uniform he rides a *Peugeot* bicycle (1908 model), delivers mail to the village and the neighbouring farms and enjoys a bit of small talk with everyone around. The distinctive mental trait of the postman is a devastating good will. He is somewhat discontented with the leisurely rhythm of work enjoyed by his colleagues, and indeed by the whole village, and the fair people easily persuade him to follow the high standards of *la poste en Amérique*, which he sees in a newsreel. So out he goes to break all records, pestered on his way by bees, and suffering from various practical jokes played on him by road repairs and level crossings, by village kids and goats.



Jacques Tati in "Jour de Fête".

To my mind Jacques Tati, in the role of the postman, is the only clown and comedian worthy of the great burlesque tradition to be seen on the screen in recent years. He owes this position partly to his unique silhouette, to what he makes of it, to his mumbling method of speech which is funny merely by virtue of its sound, owes nothing to repartee and is fundamentally akin to the aesthetics of the silent film. But what most distinguishes Jacques Tati is his talent for miming: he mimes sports.

This is, of course, the key to the whole film—since Tati wrote the original script of *Jour de Fête* and directed it with a view to revealing his capabilities in this field. Tati was once a rugger player for the Racing Club de France, and he also played for a London Club, Westcombe Park. A born mime, he used to amuse his team-mates with caricatures of racing cyclists, anglers, boxers, soccer and rugger players. These amateur successes put ideas into his head, and the act eventually reached the music-hall. He went on tour in Scandinavia, Germany, Italy and England, where he appeared at the London Casino and the Mayfair Hotel in 1936 and '37. His successes were interrupted for a short time through someone else having started the same sketch, reproducing the act although claiming to have initiated it. From 1932, however, Tati had also been appearing in some rather slapdash short films: *On Demande Une Brute*, *Gai Dimanche* and *Soigne Ta Gauche* (about boxing). The latter was actually the first film shot by René Clément who later made *Bataille du Rail*, *Les Maudits* and *Au-delà des grilles*. It is no understatement to say that these

films had little success. One reason was the routine outlook of distributors, but at the same time there is little denying that they were no masterpieces. Then Jacques Tati decided to become his own director: hence *L'école des Facteurs*, another short piece which eventually provided the outline for *Jour de Fête*.

So it was that one fine day the inhabitants of Sainte Sèvre gathered in amazement round three cameramen (in the loose sense of the word) armed with jeep and camera, some three actors and Jacques Tati. There they stayed for six months. This seemingly abnormal length of shooting time for such a trifle was due to the fact that the unit's outlook and work were not the postman's but the inhabitants'. Financially it mattered little either way, since the film was produced by a co-operative society of which they were all members. The whole film was shot there with the exception of a few scenes which take place in the café and which called for a week in the studio. Once the shooting was over, there was little else to be done besides editing and processing, despite the innumerable gags which, had the work been done by any other film unit, would have necessitated laboratory tricks. This would especially have been the case for (roughly) the last third of the film, which is the story of Jacques Tati racing madly against time, with his bicycle running under its own power and taking the turnings as if magically directed.

The inside story does not end here. The unit was also experimenting with a new colour process called Thompson Colour. This was supposed to be first-rate, but we shall never know, for it turned out to be impossible to put black and white film through the process after all. So it

stayed black and white, and the immediate cost of the film was under £15,000.

In more ways than one this film is reminiscent of the circus outlook of Mack Sennett's short pieces. It has the refreshing quality of a return to the source. It also has something more—for, whereas burlesque is so often unpleasant, or contains unpleasant elements, *Jour de Fête* is smooth and graceful throughout. As for its comic value, suffice to say that people have seen it several times, laughed at it more the second time than the first, and more at the third than the second, which, I suppose, is a manner of miracle. It is crowded with admirably timed gags that fit perfectly into the narrative. (Or possibly it is the other way round.) Jacques Tati is at present working on a new scenario: he does not know what the story will be, though he has several ideas, but these may eventually develop into something quite different—for gags on a central comic theme or character provide his raw material. Chaplin worked in the same way in the days of the Mack Sennett and Essanay comedies. With *Jour de Fête*, Henri Marquet, a friend of Tati, who helped to develop the theme, and René Wheeler, originally a screenwriter who has recently directed his autobiographical film about a jockey, *Les Premières Armes*, are to be congratulated for having helped to combine the gags neatly and gracefully in narrative form. To René Wheeler probably goes the credit for whatever light and unobtrusive invention there is in the story. The music has the extreme simplicity of charm required. In my view this film is the best made in France during 1949, and it is also probably the best commercial proposition in international cinema that there has been for a long time.



"*Jour de Fête*": arrival of the fair.

ACTING

Philip Hope-Wallace

HAVE YOU, gentle reader, ever accepted an invitation to act as an adjudicator? An adjudicator is what ordinary people call a referee and the task, into which fools blindly rush, consists of picking the best 'cellist out of thirty-two L.C.C. schoolgirls playing *Kol Nidrei* behind a screen or the best actress out of nineteen interpretations of *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. Adjudicators fall into two classes: those who get tight and trust to luck, and those who sit up half the night preparing marking charts, on which in the penumbra they jot down marks under such headings as "projection", "personality", "character", "feed-sense", "elocution", "sincerity" (this last is always heavily scored—even those who get nought in the other columns do well here). No adjudicator is ever popular except with the winning actress's mother; many are lynched; some die insane. What generally tips them over into madness is the consolation prizes. Not only must you decide who is the best actress, the best supporting actress, the best character actress; you must also allot the special Bertha Bagwash prize for daintiness of speech, the Thomas Thundersguts prize for the noisiest actor of the year.

I suppose we are all—audience, adjudicators and, above all, actors—astounded at most of the awards made in the circumstances; but really the wonder is that any awards get made at all. The awards do, in fact, usually betray a confusion of thought and instinct besides which Pavlov's dogs at dinner time are marvels of clear thinking. Sometimes the edge is a little blunted; the histrionic queen is not simply Best Actress of 1950 but is qualified as Best Motion Picture Actress—thus differentiating her from another gal whose title may be Best Actress in Tableaux Vivants in the Isle of Wight. But definition seldom gets much further. We are not even always told which year—and whether it is a January to December year or a random 365 days. Since efforts to define what is meant by "actress" are doomed to failure anyway, there is no harm in complicating the issue by subdividing it into a matter of leading players, supporting players, and character players. These ancient categories, taken over from the stage, were once relevant and useful; it is easy enough to see how they would apply to *Phèdre* or *Antony and Cleopatra*, though when one moves on a little the categories begin to break down, and it is only recently that English audiences, for instance, began to distinguish between the hero and villain in such plays as Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*. Which are "leads", "supports" and "characters" there?

As for the superlative "best", it is of course not merely silly but pernicious, and at the risk of being unfair I must call the mania for superlatives, for top-of-the-formism, a transatlantic vice. Bestow a *grand prix* by all means; hand out Oscars or ashtrays to the promising, the meritorious, the neglected. But, generally deciding whether so-and-so is "better" than so-and-so (except in *one definite rôle*) is like trying to decide whether brown ale is better than Coca Cola. You cannot compare incomparables.

Or, if you must try, you should allow time for your judgments to mature. Seeing how irregular is the release

and criticism of different films in different countries, you might suppose that adjudicators would still be milling over "the best actress of 1930". Instead of which, before you can say "Olivia de Havilland" out pops a verdict and an ashtray is awarded, and Miss So-and-so is "made".

This year the honour of being the "best supporting actress of the year" went to a Miss Mercedes McCambridge (whose name, I take leave to think, will never be on everyone's lips) for her performance in *All the King's Men*. I am told Miss Mercedes McCambridge is a fine stage actress; I daresay she'd do as well in the Ophelia Stakes as Miss Kent, and as a character actress she might well knock the stuffing out of Miss Marjorie MacOxford, whose exhibition in *They Were Not Excited* is one we shall often think of. But this title is for the Best Motion Picture Supporting Actress of the Year. And the question arises, do we see enough of Miss McCambridge's acting in that film to justify any sort of award at all? In this matter, like Dorothy Parker when told "President Blank is dead", I feel like retorting, "But how can they possibly tell"?

As the ideologue's henchlady, Miss McCambridge neither feeds nor supports in the severely technical sense—except at very occasional and not always very important moments. She has a scene of bright-eyed hard-boiledness; one of harsh mothering—when she makes the poor sap drunk to console him; one (good) scene more or less solo where she reflects that her skin is not the "skin that men adore", and one good sex tantrum, but it all hardly amounts to anything one could call a performance, convincing though these little peeps of Miss McCambridge may be. I dare to think that a considerable proportion of the same effect in each case could have been obtained by some actress of lesser calibre, that is to say, in all which concerns the art of acting.

Once before, I called attention to a popular inability to differentiate between a role and the performance of it; a failure which had a most interesting illustration the other day in the case of a young Liverpoolian lady who, having "acted" as a pick-up girl in a youth hostel film, subsequently went to law to recover damages for the injury that (she felt) her good name had thereby received. I suggest that in the case of this year's best supporting actress award we are confronted by a not unrelated confusion between what is loosely called Personality on one side, and the Art of Acting on the other. That Miss McCambridge, with her corn-crake voice and uninnocent eye, is a personality and a tremendous one, I do not of course dispute. Yet the possibility of confusion has always seemed to me a great danger. On the stage, one can instantly tell the difference of an effect produced by "sheer personality" and an effect which is due to technical skill. The latter is ultimately the only thing which will carry you through the larger flights; you cannot act on a stage for long by personality alone. But on the screen, where anyway it is not easy to separate the individual art of the film actor from the art of the director who primes him, the contribution of effulgent personality is often hard to assess. All the evidence of this film proves is that Miss McCambridge, excellently well suited to the little rôle, never puts (or is never allowed to put) a foot wrong. That feet can still be put wrong, even with so sure a guide as this director, can be observed from another female performance: Miss Joanne Dru expressing emotion by those eye-closings and head-tossings which

(Continued on page 180)

Un-American Activities

THE CASE of the "Hollywood ten" moved a few weeks ago to what had, for a long time, appeared its disturbing but unavoidable conclusion. The ten—producer Adrian Scott, director Edward Dmytryk, writer-director Herbert Biberman, and screenwriters Alvah Bessie, Lester Cole, Ring Lardner Jr., John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, Samuel Ornitz and Dalton Trumbo—were originally summoned on September 23rd, 1947, to appear before the Congressional Committee on Un-American Activities. The somewhat overheated proceedings of this committee, established to investigate communist "infiltration" in the film colony and presided over by the energetic J. Parnell Thomas (himself now in prison after padding his congressional payroll with the salaries of non-existent secretaries), did not encourage balanced statements or rational verdicts. The ten refused to answer when asked whether or not they were communists, and attacked the committee as bitterly as its few Hollywood supporters (Robert Taylor, Ayn Rand, the late Sam Wood, Ginger Rogers' mother, *et al.*) had attacked them. In due course they were sentenced by a district court to terms of one year's imprisonment and a \$1,000 fine for contempt of the Congressional Committee.

Their first appeal was rejected by an Appeal Court in 1949, the court claiming that "the right of free speech is not absolute, but must yield to national interests justifiably thought to be of larger importance. The same is true of the right to remain silent". In April of this year, the appeals of John Howard Lawson and Dalton Trumbo (the other eight had agreed to regard this as a test case) came before the Supreme Court. By a 6—2 vote the Court decided that the case should not be reviewed. Imprisonment was then inevitable.

The ten have issued a statement claiming that "the Supreme Court has welcomed governmental censorship,

political blacklisting and thought control into our system. By this decision it has announced that only those Americans will be safe from intimidation and inquisition who will crawl before men like J. Parnell Thomas, John Rankin and Senator McCarthy". This is a statement which demands and will get sympathy: but the case, to be fully understood, must be seen in perspective.

The ten were sentenced for the equivalent of contempt of court. The Congressional Committee, in spite of the theatrical atmosphere of the hearings on this occasion, is an officially constituted body, empowered to call witnesses and to examine them. Once before the Committee, the ten had the constitutional right to refuse to answer the fatal question, on the ground that it was liable to incriminate them. Instead, they chose direct attack on the Committee itself, challenging its authority and its rights. Among many violent statements, the most impassioned was that of John Howard Lawson, who said: "I am not on trial here; this Committee is on trial before the people of America". Legally, they had cut the ground from under their own feet. Irrespective of moral rights and wrongs, they were technically guilty of contempt of court.

During the last two years, also, the general temper of America has sharpened. The *Herald Tribune*, in a leader of April 12th, said: "We are in a whole new climate of opinion with regard to these issues". The Congressional Committee now seems to many Americans a necessary safeguard which must be empowered with sufficient authority. Sympathy has slipped away from the men who attacked it.

In a country not yet so overshadowed by the atmosphere of the cold war, the fate of the ten must still appear an arbitrary and unnecessary tragedy. Whatever the legal guilt, the penalty seems quite unduly heavy.

(All the King's Men continued from page 164)

mond Greenleaf) than because he laid hands on the doctor's sister (Joanne Dru).

Despite the awards, the choppily contrived script of *All the King's Men* forbids much display of serious acting talent. Broderick Crawford does indeed suggest he has it in small offside scenes before he gets into his Oscar-winning gallop and Mercedes McCambridge's political moll is a masterly insinuation of sheer bravura. John Ireland as Jack Burden looks to me like the screen's nearest approach to the American literary anti-hero and could function admirably in a film version of John O'Hara's "Appointment in Samarra".

Robert Rossen's career as a Hollywood script writer began in a distinguished way with *They Won't Forget* for Warner's in 1937 and tailed down into the mediocre levels of competent success until he again asserted himself as an individualistic writer-director with *Body and Soul* and as a creative producer with *Undercover Man*, both in their way more satisfactory than *All the King's Men*. His penchant for candid camera characterisation and newsreel effects was given play in those films and in *Johnny O'Clock*.

It has been applied exhaustively in *All the King's Men* but unfortunately without the discretion that can co-ordinate fact with fiction. The backgrounds dramatically angled and grouped by photographer Burnett Guffey in the Californian towns of Suisun, Fairfield and Stockton, and

peopled by the actual inhabitants of those places, run away with the story.

The film has two separate textures and conflicting rhythms though some of the earlier sequences do admirably fuse the naturalistic and fictional, notably the hangover prelude to the barbecue speech. It is easy to understand why Rossen, in revolt (like so many in Hollywood) against the lacquered studio conventions, sees in the realism of the Italians a shining light. But realism comes from within as well as from without and the core of meaning that might have made this film a step forward from *Boomerang* (if not an Oscar winner) does not exist amid all the courageous camera-work.

This, it is worth noting, is given an exceptional visual brilliance by the lowering weather—unusual in California or at least not advertised on the screen—in which much of the film had to be shot in order to make the schedule. And the sound track crowns these adventitious effects of realism by vivid crowd noises, overlapping dialogues, carefully handled acoustics and a restriction of music.

Rossen, canonised and protected by Oscars, can well go on to exploit the double escape—from studio and from sunshine. And simultaneously he can well be caught on another success wagon as the brilliant writer-director and practitioner of facile realism before he has time to marshal the talents that, confusedly still, exist in him.

DICKENS, GRIFFITH AND THE FILM TO-DAY (1)

S. M. Eisenstein



A Dickensian group from Griffith's "Way Down East". Lilian Gish (centre).

Eisenstein's last book, "Film Form", a collection of his miscellaneous writing over the last fifteen years, was published in America nearly two years ago. We are pleased to announce that Dennis Dobson Ltd. have acquired the rights for this country, and will publish the book at a later date. Meanwhile, SIGHT AND SOUND is serialising parts of it each month: in this issue we begin the first part of an important essay on Dickens and Griffith. The translation is by Jay Leyda.

"THE KETTLE BEGAN IT. . . ."

Thus Dickens opens his *Cricket On The Hearth*.

"The kettle began it. . . ."

What could be further from films! Trains, cowboys, chases . . . And *The Cricket On The Hearth*? "The kettle began it!" But, strange as it may seem, movies also were boiling in that kettle. From here, from Dickens, from the Victorian novel, stem the first shoots of American film aesthetic, forever linked with the name of David Wark Griffith.

Although at first glance this may not seem surprising, it does appear incompatible with our traditional concepts of cinematography, in particular with those associated in our minds with the American cinema. Factually, however, this relationship is organic, and the "genetic" line of descent is quite consistent.

Let us first look at that land where, although not perhaps its birthplace, the cinema certainly found the soil in which to grow to unprecedented and unimagined dimensions.

We know from whence the cinema appeared first as a world-wide phenomenon. We know the inseparable link between the cinema and the industrial development of America. We know how production, art and literature reflect the capitalist breadth and construction of the United States of America. And we also know that American capitalism finds its sharpest and most expressive reflection in the American cinema.

But what possible identity is there between this Moloch of modern industry, with its dizzy tempo of cities and subways, its roar of competition, its hurricane of stock market transactions on the one hand and . . . the peaceful, patriarchal Victorian London of Dickens' novels on the other?

Let's begin with this "dizzy tempo", this "hurricane", and this "roar". These are terms used to describe the United States by persons who know that country solely through books—books limited in quantity and not too carefully selected.

Visitors to New York City soon recover from their astonishment at this sea of lights (which is actually im-

mense), this maelstrom of the stock market (actually its like is not to be found anywhere), and all this roar (almost enough to deafen one).

As far as the speed of the traffic is concerned, one can't be overwhelmed by this in the streets of the metropolis for the simple reason that speed can't exist there. This puzzling contradiction lies in the fact that the high-powered automobiles are so jammed together that they can't move much faster than snails creeping from block to block, halting at every crossing not only for pedestrian crowds but for the counter-creeping of the cross-traffic.

As you make your merely minute progress amidst a tightly packed glacier of other humans, sitting in similarly high-powered and imperceptibly moving machines, you have plenty of time to ponder the duality behind the dynamic face of America, and the profound interdependence of this duality in everybody and everything American. As your 90-horsepower motor pulls you jerkily from block to block along the steep-cliffed streets, your eyes wander over the smooth surfaces of the skyscrapers. Notions lazily crawl through your brain: "Why don't they seem high?" "Why should they, with all that height, still seem cozy, domestic, small-town?"

You suddenly realise what "trick" the skyscrapers play on you: although they have many floors, each floor is quite low. Immediately the soaring skyscraper appears to be built of a number of small town buildings, piled on top of each other. One merely needs to go beyond the city limits or, in a few cities, merely beyond the centre of the city, in order to see the same buildings, piled, not by the dozens, and fifties, and hundreds, on top of each other, but laid out in endless rows of one- and two-storied stores and cottages along main streets, or along half-rural side-streets.

You often come across regiments of skyscrapers that have moved deep into the countryside, twisting their dense nets of railroads around them; but at the same rate small-town agrarian America appears to have overflowed into all but the very centres of the cities; now and then one turns a skyscraper corner, only to run head on into some home of colonial architecture, apparently whisked from some distant savannah of Louisiana or Alabama to this very heart of the business city.

But there where this provincial wave has swept in more than a cottage here or a church there (gnawing off a corner of that monumental modern Babylon, "Radio City"), or a cemetery, unexpectedly left behind in the very centre of the financial district, or the hanging wash of the Italian district, flapping just around the corner, off Wall Street—this good old provincialism has turned inward to apartments, nestling in clusters around fireplaces, furnished with soft grandfather-chairs and the lace doilies that shroud the wonders of modern technique: refrigerators, washing-machines, radios.

In order to understand Griffith, one must visualise an America made up of more than visions of speeding automobiles, streamlined trains, racing ticker tape, inexorable conveyor-belts. One is obliged to comprehend this second side of America as well—America, the traditional, the patriarchal, the provincial. And then you will be considerably less astonished by this link between Griffith and Dickens.

The threads of both these Americas are interwoven in the style and personality of Griffith—as in the most fantastic of his own parallel montage sequences.

What is most curious is that Dickens appears to have guided *both* lines of Griffith's style, reflecting both faces of America: Small-Town America, and Super-Dynamic America.

This can be detected at once in the "intimate" Griffith of contemporary or past American life, where Griffith is profound, in those films about which Griffith told me, that "they were made for myself and were invariably rejected by the exhibitors".

But we are a little astonished when we see that the construction of the "official", sumptuous Griffith, the Griffith of tempestuous tempi, of dizzying action, of breathtaking chases—has also been guided by the same Dickens! But we shall see how true this is.

First the "intimate" Griffith, and the "intimate" Dickens.

The kettle began it . . .

As soon as we recognize this kettle as a typical close-up we exclaim: "Why didn't we notice it before! Of course, this is the purest Griffith. How often we've seen such a close-up at the beginning of an episode, a sequence, or a whole film by him!" By the way, we shouldn't overlook the fact that one of Griffith's earliest films was based on *The Cricket On The Hearth*.

Certainly, this kettle is a typical Griffith-esque close-up. A close-up saturated, we now become aware, with typically Dickens-esque "atmosphere", with which Griffith, with equal mastery, can envelop the severe face of life in *Way Down East*, and the icy cold moral face of his characters who push the guilty Anna (Lillian Gish) onto the shifting surface of a swirling ice-break.

Isn't this the same implacable atmosphere of cold that is given by Dickens, for example, in *Dombey and Son*? The image of Mr. Dombey is revealed through cold and prudery. And the print of cold lies on everyone and everything—everywhere. And "atmosphere"—always and everywhere—is one of the most expressive means of revealing the inner world and ethical countenance of the characters themselves..

We can recognise this particular method of Dickens in Griffith's inimitable bit-characters who seem to have run straight from life on to the screen. I can't recall who speaks with whom in one of the street scenes of the modern story of *Intolerance*. But I shall never forget the mask of the passer-by with nose pointed forward between spectacles and straggly beard, walking with hands behind his back as if he were manacled. As he passes he interrupts the most pathetic moment in the conversation of the suffering boy and girl. I can remember next to nothing of the couple, but this passer-by, who is visible in the shot only for a passing glimpse, stands alive before me now—and I haven't seen the film for twenty years!

Occasionally these unforgettable figures actually walked into Griffith films almost directly from the street: a bit-player, developed in Griffith's hands to stardom; the passer-by who may never again have been filmed; and that mathematics teacher who was invited to play a terrifying butcher in *America*—the late Louis Wolheim—who ended the film career thus begun with his incomparable performance as "Kat" in *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

These striking figures of sympathetic old men are also quite in the Dickens tradition; and these noble and slightly one-dimensional figures of sorrow and fragile maidens; and these rural gossips and sundry odd characters. They are

Elements of Dickens in Griffith's films. *Right:* The girl rescued from the ice-flow in *Way Down East*. *Below:* The gentle Orphans of the Storm.



especially convincing in Dickens when he uses them briefly, in episodes.

"The only other thing to be noticed about (Pecksniff) is that here, as almost everywhere else in the novels, the best figures are at their best when they have the least to do. Dickens' characters are perfect as long as he can keep them out of his stories. Bumble is divine until a dark and practical secret is entrusted to him . . . Micawber is noble when he is doing nothing; but he is quite unconvincing when he is spying on Uriah Heep . . . Similarly, while Pecksniff is the best thing in the story, the story is the worst thing in Pecksniff. . . ."

Free of this limitation, and with the same believability, Griffith's characters grow from episodic figures into those fascinating and finished images of living people, in which his screen is so rich.

Instead of going into detail about this, let us rather return to that more obvious fact—the growth of that second side of Griffith's creative craftsmanship—as a magician of tempo and montage; a side for which it is rather surprising to find the same Victorian source.

When Griffith proposed to his employers the novelty of a parallel "cut-back" for his first version of *Enoch Arden* (*After Many Years*, 1908), this is the discussion that took place, as recorded by Linda Arvidson Griffith in her reminiscences of Biograph days:

"When Mr. Griffith suggested a scene showing Annie Lee waiting for her husband's return to be followed by a scene of Enoch cast away on a desert island, it was altogether too distracting. 'How can you tell a story jumping about like that? The people won't know what it's about'.

"Well," said Mr. Griffith, 'doesn't Dickens write that way?'

"Yes, but that's Dickens; that's novel writing; that's different'.

"Oh, not so much, these are picture stories; not so different.'"



But, to speak quite frankly, all astonishment on this subject and the apparent unexpectedness of such statements can be ascribed only to—our ignorance of Dickens.

All of us read him in childhood, gulped him down greedily, without realising that much of his irresistibility lay not only in his capture of detail in the childhoods of his heroes, but also in that spontaneous, childlike skill for storytelling, equally typical for Dickens and for the American cinema, which so surely and delicately plays upon the infantile traits in its audience.

Apparently Griffith was more perceptive . . .

(To be continued.)

REVALUATIONS—3

Roger Manvell



Shooting Stars, 1928

Produced by British Instructional. Story by Anthony Asquith. Script by John Orton. Director: A. V. Bramble. Photography by Carl Fisher. Camera: S. Rodwell and M. Harris. Sets by Ian Campbell-Grey. Art Direction by Walter Murton. With Annette Benson as the Film Actress, Brian Aherne as her Husband and Donald Calthrop as her Lover.

Annette Benson as the Actress in "Shooting Stars".

The purpose of this series of reviews is to look again at films which have come to be regarded as "classics" in the history of the cinema. Although what matters to us here is their intrinsic value as motion pictures, their importance historically speaking will also be kept in mind. In addition we shall give a summary of some past critical opinion on the film.

We hope this series of revaluations will be of use to film societies faced with the problem of preparing programme notes for their audiences as well as of interest to all readers who like old as well as new films.

Shooting Stars, like many films of its period, requires in the critic a sense of perspective before it can be given its due. For it is really a film of considerable merit, with a number of serious drawbacks. The motion picture camera is a completely merciless instrument. Whereas a play of the period is read now as a verbal text on which the reader superimposes his own more or less modernised visual idea of what it would all look like if it were produced, the film comes starkly out of the past and shows all the affectations of its time. I was nineteen when this film was made, and I have only an inexact, partly idealised and heavily censored recollection of how we really looked and behaved. I feel no identification at all with the people of this curious past life. No woman nowadays could either seriously or in fun, posture and fret like Annette Benson does as the film-actress heroine of *Shooting Stars*: the same frailties of female temperament to-day have a totally different mode of expression. The things which always date a film most

violently are feminine fashions and feminine behaviour. The men may look absurd, but their absurdity is at least identifiable as the same sort of absurdity as they practise to-day.

Another disconcerting fact about *Shooting Stars* is its lack of that most important of all the unities—the unity of mood. It is really a satiric comedy, with a sharp moral about faithfulness in marriage. Yet it results in the tragic death on a film-set of a slapstick comedian, shot by a bullet intended by the wife for her very innocent husband. This violent end brings a retribution which is out of all proportion to the sin committed: the comedian has done no more than flirt with the wife at her very patent invitation, which she offers with eyes carefully rolled under the shelter of a cloche hat and with clinging arms protruding from the holes at the sides of what is surely the straightest and the ugliest evening-dress any designer could produce.

A ritual procession of studio-hands carries the dead

body out of the building across the set where the Actress is performing the last shot in her romantic cowboy film, in which she co-stars with her husband. She faints: the bullet has been meant for him and not for her lover. Her husband realises what has happened, yet nothing is done about it. She passes out of his life, loses her Hollywood contract, and survives in poverty as a film extra. The weakness of *Shooting Stars* is that it has no real human purpose; it is a plot contrived around a triangle relationship which is forced from one situation to the next with no regard for reality. To appreciate the merits of the film, therefore, one must disregard the human beings in it; this alone can make the death-scene and the heroine's escape from justice tolerable. Similarly, there is no real merit in the actors' performances: they merely maintain the plot by acting it out in as naturalistic a style as the melodrama of the situations allows.

Yet *Shooting Stars* is a film of very great interest. Its background of studio life and works appears completely authentic, with no false attempt to make it match the melodrama of the story. Since virtually the whole of the film takes place either inside the studio or on a seaside location, the story soon begins to take second place to the picture which the film gives of silent film-making in the twenties. The two stages in the large studio building operate simultaneously, the lower one occupied by a unit shooting a romantic cowboy thriller against very flimsy sets, the upper one used by another unit making a crude slapstick farce in which Calthrop plays a clown chased by a fat man in a striped bathing-suit who incessantly fires a revolver. Both films have their attendant orchestras to work up "mood" in the actors; both have their industrious technicians and directors with megaphones. Above the stages is the gallery of dressing-rooms; the section for the girls supports the notice, "Gentlemen are requested not to loiter in this part of the gallery". The sea-side location looks as dreary as any seaside resort can look when the tide is out, and the scenery consists of nothing but low cliffs and sand-dunes down which the stunt man tumbles with his bicycle, when he takes over from the clown who is still being chased by the fat man. Both these films are plainly "quickies" made on the cheap with a star or two to give them lustre, and in which no one takes more than a workmanlike interest in order to earn his living.

The second interesting point about *Shooting*



"Shooting Stars": three studio scenes. Annette Benson. Brian Aherne. Below right: development of the drama within the film—the loaded gun.



"Shooting Stars". Lover, Actress and Husband: Donald Calthrop, Annette Benson, Brian Aherne.

Stars is the amount of technical contrivance used in it, showing a strong influence from the films of France and Germany. This influence was to become characteristic of the earlier films with which Asquith was associated, and writing in *The Film Till Now* only a year or so later, Paul Rotha said this about Asquith's work at the time:

"He has learnt varied forms of treatment from abroad, but has not as yet fully understood the logical reason for using them. He has studied the Soviet and German cinema, but has failed to search deep enough. His technique still remains, after four productions, primitively on the surface. In his last picture, for example, there were several instances of quick cutting and symbolic reference, but they were employed because of themselves and not as a contributory factor to the film composition".

Rachael Low observes how the "highbrow" tendency of *Shooting Stars* was made possible in a British studio:

"The film, made towards the end of the silent period, was British Instructional's first venture into studio-made fiction after some years of successful actuality production. It was, too, the result of a deliberate policy of recruiting bright young men of University level and letting them try out their ideas, startling as some of these were, under the restraining influence and executive experience of older technicians. In this case Asquith (as writer and nominally assistant), J. C. Orton and Ian Campbell-Grey must have proved a difficult team for director A. V. Bramble and art director Walter Murton, two film makers of long standing. In a way it is an all-purpose film, a show-business story with all the box-office appeal of 'glimpses behind the scenes', and at the same time with deftness and irony to delight the more sophisticated".

An advanced form of technique can only be effective when it arises directly out of the emotional realisation of a

situation or a character. Because *Shooting Stars* is in any case a contrived film, these points of technique excite curiosity rather than create an emotional impression. The most effective examples are the great crane-shots which show the size and desolation of the huge studio with its two little centres of activity; the satiric cutting which accompanies the self-dramatising remarks of the actress to the lady-reporter from a fan magazine ("Beauty to her is the very breath of life"; "adores all furry and feathery things"; "has found her ideal mate"); the change-over of Calthrop in his dressing-room from a clown to a dapper, caddish little man of the world; the satiric film-quotation from "My Man" which Julian, the husband, watches in a public cinema with growing excitement at his own performance ("I wish life was more like the movies", he sighs, after his return home); the impressionistic accident to the stunt-man on the bicycle (which is similar in treatment to the shots of the man who falls near the beginning of the Odessa steps sequence in *Potemkin*); the long exchange of significant looks when the Lover arrives at the Actress's flat only to find the husband there; the death of the comedian on the swinging chandelier and the long shots of the little procession of studio-hands carrying the body through the desolate studio, followed by the collapse of the Actress when she realises that her husband knows what she has done; and, finally, the last scene in which she kneels to pray unrecognised in the vast church set which is struck while she is absorbed in thought and disintegrates all around her (this is, for me, the most imaginative moment in the film), and the long sequence of her final exit across the empty studio after her ex-husband has failed to recognise her, until she goes out, a tiny human silhouette, through a door in the far, dark distance. These various moments, combined with the general excellence of the film-making episodes, make *Shooting Stars* well worth preservation and re-showing.

BOOK REVIEWS

MOVIE PARADE, by Paul Rotha and Roger Manvell. (The Studio, 30/-).

THE FASCINATION which the still holds for the film addict is curious. The art of the cinema, after all, lies in the juxtaposition of two kinds of movement—camera movement and editing—neither of which the still can recapture. On these grounds, some purists reject the still altogether. But it has compensating advantages: the atmosphere of a film, the emphasis of a director's style (notably his use of human figures, of close-up and long shot), even a technique of acting, can be evoked by a still as by no amount of descriptive writing. This makes the appearance of a picture book as comprehensive and handsomely produced as *Movie Parade* as important as the publication of a new history of the cinema.

Movie Parade, first published in 1936, and now reissued with so much new material that it is in effect a new book, is a companion piece to Paul Rotha's *The Film Till Now*, also reprinted with amplifications. It comes, with the blessings of the British Film Academy, from the *doyens* of academic criticism in this country. It contains nearly seven hundred stills, many of the highest quality both in their own right and in the light they throw on the films illustrated, and some succinct introductory remarks from each author. It is a serious volume, designed to provide a pictorial history of the cinema, at its best and sometimes at its worst: a history consisting not of comment but of evidence from within the films themselves.

It must be admitted, though, that *Movie Parade* is something of a disappointment, coming from so distinguished a source. In a book of this kind, there are three main problems: the selection of stills, their grouping, and the quality of reproduction. Few readers will have much to quarrel with on the first count—except the inevitable personal preferences which always seem, so capricious are we, to have been deliberately omitted. The second problem is more important. Stills can be grouped in a straightforward way by countries or chronology; on a more academic level, by directors, or even by types of shots—a series of close-ups or long shots. Manvell and Rotha have chosen division, as with the earlier version of this book, into film subjects—under such generic headings as Epic, Romance, Comedy, War, Drama. This is a method which puts difficulties in the way of a reader anxious to follow the development of styles and techniques. In his introduction, for instance, Paul Rotha tells us that we may trace how "*Red River* came by way of a *Cimarron*"—but one is to be found under Westerns, and the other under Epic. Some films, too, seem to have been pushed into questionable categories, rather because room must be found for them there than because they belong there. Notable are *Lumiere d'Été*, lurking as a comedy of manners, and the rugged *Edge of the World*, classed as Romance, and practically cheek by jowl with

Spring In Park Lane. No classification can be perfect, but this method seems to lead to some unnecessary problems.

The production quality is extremely high, and it is perhaps ungenerous to suggest that some stills might have been sacrificed altogether for a larger reproduction of others. A book which gave due space to every still could be produced only at a prohibitive price, but the occasional packing of stills six, seven or even ten to a page tends to give the effect of a tour of a gallery in which pictures have been reduced to postcard size.

These reservations are made in view of the fact that *Movie Parade* has been designed as a historical compilation and not simply as a picture book. While its historical value does not seem to me as great as it could have been, there is no doubt that as a collection of stills there is much in it to give pleasure; it remains a book that enthusiasts will certainly want to buy.

PENELOPE HOUSTON.

THE FILM INDUSTRY IN GREAT BRITAIN: Some Facts and Figures (British Film Academy, 2/6).

THE BRITISH FILM ACADEMY's little booklet is an exceptionally valuable and very well arranged compilation of statistics concerning the film industry in this country. The statistics cover production, distribution and exhibition. Production figures include such matters as the number of feature films produced each year in Britain from 1939-1949; labour employment figures and the control of studio space; specimen budgets, with a comparison between the costs of expensive prestige pictures and cheaper first features; numbers of documentary and children's films produced. There is a section on the economics and complete set-up of the distribution companies, another on exhibition (theatrical and non-theatrical), and a chapter on miscellaneous subjects such as official organisations and committees (the British Film Institute, the C.O.I. Films Division, the Board of Censors, the National Film Finance Corporation). This chapter also gives a summary of the findings of the Gater and Plant Committees.

The material has been compiled with great lucidity by John Gillett of the British Film Academy, under the guidance of a committee comprising R. K. Neilson Baxter, Roger Manvell, Paul Rotha, Rachael Whear and Basil Wright. Not the least interesting piece of material given is the budget for two British second features, *Dr. Morelle* and *P.C.49*, both made in a country house converted into a studio: the films cost £15,000 and £12,000 respectively. Although their subject matter is primitive and their execution undistinguished, it is a good sign that films of quota length can be produced for this amount. There is no reason why imagination should increase the cost.

JAMES MORGAN.

Marie Seton

ANCIENT ROME IN GANGSTER TOWN

Left: The Forum Scene. Charlton Heston as Mark Antony. Below: Cassius (Grosvenor Glenn) and Brutus (David Bradley) "Tempt me no further, I shall forget myself . . ."



Julius Cæsar



CHICAGO—famous, or infamous, for its gangland wars, slaughterhouses and fringe of steel mills—now supplies an answer to one of Sergei Eisenstein's quips: "The Americans are the Romans of the modern world".

Amidst the harsh welter of factories, skyscrapers and tenements, huge and ponderous edifices copied by culture-conscious manufacturers from the city of Caesars loom up in Chicago. There are the monstrous colonnades atop of the sport's stadium of Soldier's Field; the façade of the Museum of Science and Industry and the "mosaic" floors and sweeping steps of the memorial building of the fraternal Order of Elks. There is even a soot-encrusted peristyle standing incongruously in the downtown section of the city.

It was here in Chicago that the latest exponent of Shakespeare—Orson Welles—first began to dabble in theatre. It was also here that another enterprising Chicagoan from the same high school—David Bradley—beat Orson Welles to a production of *Macbeth* on 16 mm. some years ago.

Bradley, who reminds me of Welles in his early days, utilised the neo-Roman architecture of Chicago last summer to provide the locations for a new Shakespearean film on 16 mm., *Julius Caesar*—at the astonishingly low cost of \$10,000. This, by American standards, must win the prize as a "peanuts" production. It should also win a prize for being the most essentially "filmic" production of Shakespeare.

The limitations in his budget compelled Bradley to use his imagination. Unable to spend money on elaborate sets, large crowds and star actors, he concentrated upon the genuine film possibilities of Shakespeare's text. Being an honest man, he admits that he approached *Julius Caesar* with certain sequences originally created by Sergei Eisenstein in mind. Thus, many of his low camera angles remind one of Eduard Tisse's effects in *Alexander Nevsky*, while the lighting used for the gathering conspiracy of Cassius and his ensnarement of Brutus echo chiaroscuro pattern in *Ivan the Terrible*. For the Battle of Philippi, David Bradley not only used cutting methods derived from the Battle on the Ice in *Nevsky* but adapted certain compositional effects from Eisenstein's unfinished film *Que Viva Mexico!* Whereas Eisenstein had employed the maguay cactus in the *Maguay* story (*Thunder Over Mexico*), as the dominant motif, Bradley uses dead trees and their tortured roots to provide a unity of form and content for his battles, which were shot in the sand dunes at the southern end of Lake Michigan a few miles from Chicago.

But Bradley is more than a clever imitator of another's ideas; he has his own creative imagery. Hence he adds a great deal of his own to the battle scenes; in fact, the very elements of passion and sudden realism lacking in Eisenstein's Battle on the Ice. In the midst of single combat, mostly portrayed in close-ups, Bradley catches the audience up into a horrified gasp when a swift cut places a sword blade upon the bare neck before the eye for a moment; or when one of the combatants, suddenly loosed from combat by death, stumbles, then falls back over a dead root.

As I said, financial limitations aided Bradley. Since he could not "burn" Rome he uses fire imaginatively and to gain extremely interesting effects. For example, the death of Cinna, at the hands of the enraged Roman populace,

is enacted within a ring of fire. The angle of the camera—overhead—gives the forceful impression of the people having hunted Cinna into a burning building and there butchered him, leaving his body to be consumed as on a pyre.

Unlike the ghost of Hamlet's father in the Olivier production of *Hamlet*, where one was made unpleasantly conscious of long theatrical tradition, David Bradley's lighting effects for the appearance of Caesar's ghost convince one of an image *within* the mind of Brutus before the Battle of Philippi and during the last seconds before he falls on his sword. This effect of psychological "realism" is introduced into the picture much earlier when Caesar's wife, Calpurnia, awakes in the night from a convincing dream in which:

"Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds,
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol . . ."

The strength of the production lies in its compelling motion in terms of film. Bradley has made the most excellent use of the colonnades on top of the stadium of Soldier's Field and the façade and steps of the Museum of Science and Industry to give his camera not only mobility but unity of movement. Natural light and shadow has been employed to its maximum effect and, oddly enough, the pseudo-classical buildings used as sets give a stronger impression of authenticity than many carefully designed period sets which strain for accuracy.

Bradley was no less ingenious when it came to the use of music for the battle scenes—the only sequences in which music is introduced. A martial, though impressionistic, score was composed by John Becker, a composer resident at a nearby college. Then Becker, with a handful of musicians from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, descended one night into the empty swimming pool of what was once an athletic club and is now Bradley's Paragon Pictures Studio. They played away in the pool so that the echo produced a sound track which blares forth like a major philharmonic orchestra.

The weakness of the production lies here and there in some of the acting. Interested in the visual aspects of his characters, Bradley was in some instances unable to find actors whose physical fitness for their role—for example, Grosvenor Glenn as Cassius—was equalled by their histrionic talent to speak Shakespeare's text. The plastic line of Glenn's face, which is so effective during the early scenes of conspiracy, is not matched by a voice of passion when the clash of wills begins to develop between Cassius and Brutus. With Shakespeare's text one cannot cut in time to avoid a sag.

Like Orson Welles, Bradley is himself an actor, although he says that he has played his last role, that of Brutus. His portrayal of Brutus is that of a gullible man who is a fool as well as noble. As Anthony, Carlton Heston so impressed the Hollywood talent scouts who have seen the film that he has been given a seven-year contract. And Bradley too is headed for Hollywood; he will shortly go to work for M.G.M.

So David Bradley has arrived at the cross-roads. If Hollywood denies him the opportunity to experiment it will be a pity, for here is a man with a most exciting directorial eye.

THE SUPPORTING FILM

Adrian Reid

MY AIM IN WRITING this series of articles is in part to draw attention to the possibilities of the short film, and above all to campaign, to appeal for better shorts in practice. Last month I pointed out that the public wants better supporting films, and is to a greater or lesser extent bored or disgusted with what it is getting now. I suggested also that there were several comparatively undeveloped forms of the short film—particularly the “short-story” film and the “reportage”—which offer great scope to the producer, and which might perhaps help to regain the public’s interest in the supporting programme.

But such films are expensive to produce. We have to consider the economics of the supporting film industry, and when we ask to start with, “Is the public prepared to pay for these better supporting films?” the answer, I am afraid, is “No”—or at least the exhibitors and the distributors (who stand between the public and the producer) are not, which amounts to the same thing.

Is the campaign worth going on with, then? Yes, because perhaps more important than any other argument for better short films, or for supporting films at all, is the fact, as I said last month, that short film production is a training ground for talent of every sort—technicians, directors, writers, players, and it must be allowed to survive for this reason; or else the feature film industry as a whole will suffer gravely, as it is suffering now, from lack of new blood and new ideas.

The force of this argument is coming to be generally recognised. An executive of one of the leading distributors came out with it in conversation quite recently; it is being taken up in the columns of both the national and the trade press; the Working Party on Film Production Costs recommended in its report: “That the industry be urged to make full use of the Training and Apprenticeship Council; and that the companies making supporting films be utilised for training purposes”. But general support and recommendations are of little value unless followed by action. Can anything be done in practice?

Let us examine the situation as it is now. A good net return for the producer of a short film at the moment is: for a one-reeler, £400; for a two-reeler, £750; for a three-reeler, £1,500. To achieve these figures it is usually necessary for the film to be booked by one of the circuits, and before this handsome reward even begins to trickle in the producer must often wait anything up to a year from the time he first hands over his finished picture to the distributor.

A further condition that must be fulfilled before the producer can hope to come near these “top prices” is that his film shall be British Quota. And here we come to the first grotesque anomaly. Quoting from the Cinematograph Films Act, 1948—“Every film registered under this part of the Act as a British film shall be registered as

an exhibitors quota film, unless the total labour costs of the film are less than ten shillings per foot”.

In other words, a two-reel film of, say, 1,600 feet, must prove that it has cost more than £800 on labour alone before it can even be in the running to earn a net return of £750.

The anomaly of this “cost-test”, if it serves no other useful purpose, may serve as a warning of what may happen to anyone who seeks help in his problems from the Legislature. For, when the terms of the Film Act were being framed, the idea was put up to the Government by a group of supporting film makers themselves. I do not personally agree with the principle of it, but the aim, at least, was praiseworthy—to eliminate, by making payment of a complete unit compulsory, the cheap supporting films which had been largely responsible for alienating the public from the supporting programme as a whole. However, what the producers group also proposed to the Legislature was that a system of guaranteed minimum returns for their films should be introduced commensurate with the proposed minimum costs. The first part of the scheme became law, the second part, somewhere, somehow, went on the parliamentary rocks. Hence the present situation.

But in any case, in the present context, the point of the “cost-test” is more or less irrelevant. Although in my opinion the principle is wrong that our two-reelers *must* have cost more than £800 to be “Quota” (in other words, to have any sort of market value), the fact remains that a good short of the type we are discussing will probably do so in any case.

It is difficult when dealing with costs to come down to cases, because the budget of every film varies enormously according to conditions. But, taking our length still as 1,600 feet, let us assume that we are implementing the Working Party’s suggestion of using short film production as a training ground for technicians (i.e. that we have a reasonably complete unit working on the film) and that we are also putting into practice a sound suggestion made recently in the trade press that new players should be tried out in short films, our salaries bill will look something like this, for three weeks shooting:

	£
Producer	75
Director	60
Cameraman	51
Assistant Cameraman	30
Sound Technician	45
Assistant Sound Technician	21
2 Artistes at £25 per week each	150
Editor	51
Assistant Editor	21
Music Editor or Composer	50

Script	...	...	...	...	50
Casual Electricians	...	...	...	...	20
Camera and Sound Trainees—2	at £5 per				
week each	...	...	...	...	30
Total					£654

This budget does not include possible payments to other studio personnel. I will not take it further, for any sample budget of this sort, without a given set of conditions, is a generalisation of little value. But I think the point must be clear that any two-reeler of reasonable production value, or reasonable training value, must cost more than the £750 which it can hope to get back.

However good the short is, it makes no difference to the maximum returns I have already mentioned. Considering possible remedies, I would rule out first the possibility of appealing to the distributor or the exhibitor for a special price for a short which he may even admit is well above average in quality. It is difficult to argue against the distributor's reasoning. He says: "A short is 'fill' only". No short, however good, is responsible for bringing a single extra person into the cinema. If you offer an exhibitor a good short at a high price or a bad short at a low one (or an American short at a low one, which has already recovered its costs elsewhere), he will choose the latter. Why spend money on something which will bring you no more money?

If there is nothing to be done with distributors and exhibitors, it would seem to be a case for some form of official intervention. But the Government has recently held a committee of investigation into the film industry (under the chairmanship of Sir Arnold Plant), and the first thing we notice on reading its report is that it has apparently failed to realise the salient fact about supporting films, that they have in themselves no box-office drawing power, but are simply, in commercial terms, a functional necessity upon which an arbitrary value is placed.

Dealing with supporting films, the Committee produces once more its preferred remedy for the whole industry, the removal of the 50 per cent. ceiling on film-hire, and suggests speciously that if this were done it would, "by reason of its effect on the present averaging system, lead to a considerable improvement in the share of the total film-hire which accrues to the supplier of the supporting programme".

Or again: "So long as exhibitors continue to limit the percentage paid for any one picture, however attractive, to 50 per cent., and to pay rentals higher than their real box-office value, then for so long will it be impossible for them also to pay an adequate rental for the exceptionally strong supporting programme which will be needed to bolster up poor first features".

This may be true in the case of second features, or of double feature programmes, but in the case of shorter supporting films it shows a complete failure to understand the attitude to them prevailing in the trade—that they add nothing to a programme except length.

The Report makes further vague allusions to the possible benefit of supporting films under "more competitive trading conditions", and talks of their "box-office value". It recommends finally "that a number of producers of supporting films might . . . also consider taking joint action to promote and maintain a separate renting company for the distribution of their products, particularly if they

had reason to believe that these products called for more specialist knowledge and individual attention than a more general renting organisation might be able to offer".

They might also, of course, consider gathering together at a certain hour each day outside the offices of the principal distributors in Wardour Street with placards round their necks.

How can the comparatively small profits of supporting films (the comparatively small losses as it is now), support the cost of maintaining a renting organisation, and if the producers do unite, demanding higher prices, how can their blockade hold out against the supply of American shorts and the inevitable supply of cut-price home-produced quickies?

On the question of the production of supporting films the Report again evades the main issues. It suggests, virtually, that there shall be no production of entertainment shorts as entertainment shorts, but that the supporting programme shall be made up from such films sponsored by Government Departments and "large corporate undertakings" which happen to fit more or less into the category of general entertainment. Or, at best, that entertainment shorts shall be made only by sponsored film companies when they have no other particular job on hand.

These ideas are inadequate for two reasons. Firstly, because any Government Department or "large corporate undertaking" only sponsors films the basis of which, however indirectly it may be presented, is propaganda—and what percentage of such films to-day accord with the needs of entertainment? Secondly, because the propaganda or pure documentary type of film is a special medium, and its makers tend to devote themselves permanently to developing it. Whereas our aim is to encourage makers of entertainment shorts who will graduate to the making of entertainment features.

This problem of the supporting film—that, while containing in itself cultural and entertainment possibilities, and being valuable as a training ground, it is not supported in the open market—is not unknown in other countries; and in many of them it has been solved—by Government intervention.

It is my intention to deal more fully with the supporting film in other countries in a later article, but let us take here briefly two examples, France and Italy. In both these countries the short is "married" to a feature for distribution, the inclusion of the short film in the programme being in most cases compulsory. In Italy, the short is first approved by a committee, after which the State undertakes to pay the producer a sum equal to 3 per cent. of the gross takings of the programme of which it forms part. Inspection of the distributor's books is compulsory.

In the case of France, the producer is free to strike his own bargain initially. The State then pays him a sum equal to 0.7 per cent. of the gross receipts of the accompanying feature, on the express condition that this money be used for further production.

In both cases the producer is assured of a return of about £2,000 for a one-reel film—very different from the figure obtaining in England.

A solution along these lines could be arrived at easily in England: more easily than on the continent, in fact, because there is in England a basic demand by exhibitors for shorts. "Marrying" perhaps would be more difficult owing to the variations in programme composition here. But if the State did step in, my own suggestions would be:

(1) A removal of the "cost-test", to allow particularly for the good travelogue which *can* be made on very little money, and which the public will still accept if it is well done, and which serves as a useful starting point for the aspirant producer, director or cameraman.

(2) A further division of the "British Quota" classification into three categories, A, B and C. "A" representing the highest in production and entertainment value, "C" the lowest. The grading to be done by a selection committee capable of assessing both the "artistic" and the "box-office" value of the film, and of understanding its production in terms of both expenditure and achievement.

(3) An amendment of Exhibitors Quota conditions to make it compulsory for the exhibitor to make up his total percentage of Quota shorts with a fixed proportion of shorts from each category.

(4) The introduction of legislation whereby the distributor must pay the producer, within a given time after the acceptance for release, a certain fixed sum for films of each length and category. For one-reelers: "A", £2,000; "B", £1,300; "C", £700. For two-reelers: "A", £3,000; "B", £2,000; "C", £1,300; and so on.

Two comments seem necessary here. First, if the selection committee takes into account both expenditure and achievement, a brilliant film made on a very small budget will come into category "A" and bring to its producer an ample and well deserved profit, whereas a producer who consistently makes bad and expensive shorts will in time have his product "demoted" to category "B" or even "C", and eventually, if he does not improve his product or pare his budget, go out of business.

The second point that may be raised is why the onus of a fixed charge should be put on the distributor, instead of a fixed scale of hire charges being laid down for the exhibitor. The answer must be clear. Even if the hire rate were fixed at £100 per reel per booking, and the distributor only secured ten bookings, the gross still would amount to only £1,000.

Considering conditions at the moment, the proposed figures do not seem unduly hard on the distributor. A first feature of only moderate quality, we are told, can expect at least 1,500 separate bookings. If the distributor does his work, why cannot a short get the same number of bookings? 1,500 bookings, at an average rental of only £2 per booking, would mean a gross of £3,000. Take off the cost of copies (again using current first feature practices as a basis), say 35 at £7, or £245, and we are left with

£2,755. Take away even as much as a hundred pounds for incidental expenses, and, take 25 per cent. of the remainder for the distributors' charges; we are left, in round figures, with our £2,000 for the producer.

1,500 bookings is not a lot, particularly when we remember that a short "dates" far less than a feature, and an average of £2 per booking is certainly not a crushing burden on exhibitors. In the light of a simple calculation such as that above, the figures which the supporting film producers are receiving now are nothing short of astounding. The answer is that the distributors are simply not bothering to get bookings. They have not, as in the case of the feature, any financial interest in the film, and the few hundred pounds (£644 in the example given above) which is their share for distributing the film is in their opinion simply not worth bothering about.

(5) An arrangement with studio-owning companies whereby otherwise unused studio space might be hired to supporting film companies for a nominal sum.

These proposals are in very broad outline only, but in any case they mean Government intervention. A distributor remarked to me recently that anything is better than the dead-hand of State control: but to the producers of supporting films one thing at least is worse—the price they are getting now for their films.

What are the alternatives? With the exception of 1 and 2 of the above proposals, all the others could be implemented by voluntary action on the part of the industry itself. In the case of suggestion 5, by action on the part of the big studio-owning production companies, for they above all should be interested in the supply of new personnel, both creative and technical. In the case of (3), by action on the part of the exhibitors. If the exhibitors are not interested in the welfare of the production side of the industry they ought at least to be interested in the welfare of their patrons—and the results of their present policy of buying only the cheapest shorts on offer is, as I said last month, definitely giving displeasure to their patrons.

But above all it is on the part of distributors that voluntary action is required. A distributor knows very well the difference between a good short and a bad one, without having it labelled A, B or C by someone else. And the proposed payments to producers are not a burden on distributors. They are merely, shall we say, ethical, and their recoupment on the market simply requires a change of attitude towards the supporting film.

Has the film industry sufficient conscience to consider these points and act on them? Or must the producers of the supporting programme be the cause of further Government intervention in the affairs of the Film Industry.

(Acting continued from page 167)

get you a mark from the adjudicator in the "sincerity" column rather than the "technique" column. People are always turning plays into films as if it were the most natural thing to do. How I should like to see *All the King's Men* turned into a three-act play, and sit there with the judges who handed out the Oscars in question.

As a side line and an exercise in distinguishing between personality, stage (or active) acting and screen acting (active or passive), students are strongly advised to see the

performances of Yvonne de Bray and Gabrielle Dorziat in *Les Parents Terribles* which is a stage play, with original cast, transferred, but skilfully so, to the screen; here are, by any standards, performances of extraordinary skill and power, the last word, as it were, in the naturalistic mode of acting and in them all the factors of the above problem are discernible. None of the foregoing, I need hardly add, incapacitates Miss McCambridge from one day figuring as the Dorziat of the American screen.

FILM SOCIETY NOTES



ALTHOUGH MOST film societies close down during the summer months, a few remain open during June and into July, and readers may be interested to know details of their programmes during these months.

Bournemouth. (Secretary: Margaret Jolliffe, 64b Wellington Road.) The last two programmes of this society are John Ford's *Tobacco Road* on June 11th, and the post-war German comedy, *Film Without Title*, on July 9th. In July also this society's annual one-day festival will take place with film showings and speakers.

Merseyside. (Secretary: T. F. Wilson, Blue Coat Chambers, Liverpool 1.) On June 15th and 16th this society revives a vintage Marx Brothers, *Monkey Business*, with Humphrey Jennings's mining documentary, *The Cumberland Story*.

Oxford. ("Four Winds", Blandford Avenue.) Marcel Pagnol's comedy *The Well Digger's Daughter*, with Raimu and Fernandel, forms the last programme of the season on June 11th.

Tees-side. (3 Bewley Grove, Acklam, Middlesbrough Yorks.) On June 18th Ben Hecht's *The Scoundrel*, with Noel Coward, will be shown, supported by Emmer's beautiful *Romantici a Venezia* and a short French film, *Le Rose et la Reseda*, with a commentary spoken by Jean Louis Barrault.

Tyneside. (Secretary: H. Przibram, 29 Bexley Avenue, Newcastle 5.) This society revives Garbo's *Queen Christina*, directed by Rouben Mamoulian, on June 4th, a programme of which details are not yet to hand on July 2nd, and *Film Without Title* on July 23rd concludes its season.

In London, the London Film Club continues through June with a Marx Brothers-Preston Sturges festival. Concluding programmes are: *Horse Feathers* and *The Lady Eve* (June 9th) and *Duck Soup* and *Down Went McGinty* (June 16th). A four-week Italian festival follows, the films including the first part of Rossellini's *Amore*, de Sica's *Bambini ci Guardano* and Vergano's *Il Sole Sorge Ancora*. (20-21 Took's Court, Cursitor Street, E.C.4).

The 1950-51 Film Society seasons will be considerably enriched by various films added to the distribution lists of the Central Booking Agency and the National Film Library. A selection of these were shown at the Viewing Sessions organised last month for Film Societies by the British Film Institute. New additions to the National Film Library loan section (on 35 mm. and 16 mm.) include Clair's comedy *Le Million* and Pabst's *Die Dreigroschenoper*, and such silent films as Dovzhenko's *Earth*, Griffith's *Hearts of the World*, Asquith's *Shooting Stars* and the Harold Lloyd *Safety Last*. New films available through the Central Booking Agency include the Pagnol comedy *Marius*, with Raimu and Pierre Fresnay (35 mm. and 16 mm.), *They Live by Night* (35 mm.), *Moonrise* (35 mm.), *The Guilt of Janet Ames* (35 mm. and 16 mm.), and Cocteau's *Le Sang d'un Poete* (16 mm.). Outstanding among shorts are a group of films by Luciano Emmer on painting (35 mm. and 16 mm.), and Sucksdorff's *A Divided World* (35 mm. and 16 mm.).

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

Summer Film School

at

University College of North Wales

(Neuadd Reichel) Bangor

August 15th-29th, 1950

A Seventh Annual Film Course, following the lines of those which have been so successful in past years, has been arranged for August of this year.

The Course covers the fundamentals of film technique and history, and should prove of great value both to students and intending film lecturers. The programme will include lectures by distinguished film makers and critics, and discussions: the evenings will be devoted to the showing of films. All afternoons and both Sundays are left as free periods.

Excellent accommodation is provided in the newly built Reichel Hall. Inclusive fee for the fortnight's course, 12 guineas. Accommodation is limited to sixty, and early application is desirable.

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

164 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.C.2



CORRESPONDENCE

Whisky Galore

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—You should not have garnered by devious means the cost of *Whisky Galore*. Unless public funds are involved, the cost of a film is a very personal matter to a producing company. Had you asked us, however, we would have given you the information, provided we thought it in the public interest to do so.

Your estimate of the cost is wrong by more than a thousand or two.

There is no such thing as a non-studio feature film. A lot of actual shooting on *Whisky Galore* was done in the studio. Editing, dubbing and music in any case are studio activities.

Whisky Galore over-ran its budget by the unprecedented figure of 60 per cent. to 70 per cent. The essential exterior work took about twice as long as we intended owing to almost gale conditions operating around the Hebrides in one of the worst summers on record.

I suggest that such conditions could not have existed in relation to *Bicycle Thieves*, *Au Delà Des Grilles* and *The Window*.

Your comments are an over-simplification of the position and as far as *Whisky Galore* is concerned, the figures do not "reflect the fantastic anomaly of the whole position".

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL BALCON

We pay the penalty for our own deviousness, and apologise for the inaccuracy into which it has led us. While also the term "non-studio" was too loosely used, it does seem that our essential point remains. Allowing for a good summer in the Hebrides, Whisky Galore would not have over-run its budget to the extent Sir Michael's letter indicates: but it would still have cost considerably more than, say, Au Delà Des Grilles, in which the proportion of studio and non-studio work must have been roughly similar. This, of course, is not (and was not) meant to be any reflection on the policy behind Whisky Galore—merely a reflection of the present situation: for Ealing studios have pursued a consistent policy of high production quality on a modest budget.

Mr. Brian's Budget

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—Unfortunately Mr. Denis Brian's £9,250 feature about which you published a letter in the April number of SIGHT AND SOUND would never get shown. The reason can be seen by devoting study to his somewhat sweeping budget. The plain fact is that he has forgotten so many expenses that the money would run out before the film was in a presentable state. Here are a few of his omissions:—

No boom boy and no sound camera—therefore no acceptable sound.

No time to write the script—therefore no script.

No time for preparation—therefore chaos on location.

No cutting room hire, and no editing time—therefore the distributor would have to accept the unedited rushes, with all the N.G. takes and other disadvantages.

No recording theatre or time to dub the picture—so there's not much point in having music and effects, for they won't be on the final track.

No camera—but any black box with a pin-hole will do. The Assistant Cameraman can pull the film past the pinhole at twenty-four frames per second in the intervals of doing the continuity. Incidentally, I do hope that Mr. Brian won't include any pull-focus shots, because if he does the Continuity-and-Assistant-Cameraman is going to develop a squint.

No lighting or electricians for the interiors—so they will be a bit underexposed.

No titles—how shall we know how to tell our friends to see or avoid the film?

No negative insurance—but perhaps there will be no fire.

No office (where will the Production, Business and Publicity Manager sit?), no postage, no stationery, no telephone calls—so no business or publicity.

No projection—so nobody will know what the stuff looks like.

Yes, we think that pictures can be made more cheaply—but not by leaving out complete production stages, nor by employing an impossibly small number of technicians, nor by underpaying them.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN SHEARMAN. MICHAEL CLARKE.

Visual Impact

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—In his recent article, "The Visual Impact", J. Isaacs draws a distinction between film and theatre design which is, I suggest, of little value as an artistic principle.

Most film designers, it may be true, are architects. It is not true, however, to infer that a theatre setting must be conceived in the more or less two-dimensional terms of "a stage picture" with "the actors moving against the background". The whole trend of advanced stage design has been towards dispensing with flat painted scenery (whether realistic or symbolical) in favour of simple three-dimensional forms breaking away from the outmoded convention of the proscenium arch. Even in the realistic "picture-frame" theatre, composite settings (like those of Paul Sheriff for *Crime and Punishment*, or of Jo Mielziner for *Death of a Salesman*) are architectural in the strictest sense—they are concerned with the manipulation of space and not really with a *pastiche* of period decoration.

On the other hand, it is difficult to see what the film director can learn from Classical painting. A film can suggest distance, it can create some illusion of depth—but it cannot convey any precise sense of architectural space. Although the camera may move in and out of the setting, it can only record a sequence of two-dimensional pictures . . . hence the difficulties, described by Edward Carrick in his *Designing for Moving Pictures*, of photographing a room so that it appeared square.

A film cannot be designed spatially. The methods of a Claude or a Poussin (or for that matter, of a Cézanne) are not available to the film director because he is working with a mechanical process which reduces space to terms of light and shade. The formal qualities of a film are essentially two-dimensional—"a series of visual images designed in black and white and intervening tones of grey", to use Paul Rotha's words (quoted by Roger Manvell in his article on *Siegfried*). It is, I think, misleading to speak of "emphatic solidity", since the eye of the camera and the eye of the spectator do not react in the same way to the "precisely delimited acting-space".

In declaring that art-direction is becoming academic, Mr. Isaacs seems to imply that the fault is with the designer. As an artist, I would venture to say that the original designs for film settings often show surprising vitality and freshness of approach; it is in the process of interpretation that technical slickness obscures the personal qualities of style. The application of conveyor-belt principles to film art has, however, already been discussed in your columns.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that many weaknesses in the "visual impact" of the cinema—particularly static composition and general lack of pace—are inherent in unimaginative screen writing.

Yours faithfully,
K. G. KINRADE.

Film Societies: The Liberal Tradition

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—Mr. B. S. Crone has not only discovered the awful truth about Manchester but he has laid it bare in your correspondence columns. We had fervently hoped that the attendance of some ordinary people at the Manchester Film Society—people who, Mr. Crone alleges, suck toffees and canoodle during performances—would pass unnoticed.

There is, of course, a liberal tradition in Manchester, and one of its excessive manifestations is that we neither measure the brows of the people attending Film Society shows, nor yet their confections. Similarly, we do not ascertain the erotic temperature of members before the performance. Mr. Crone's indictment, however, has stung us into realising that what we thought was liberty is really licence, and immediate steps are to be taken to see that members as well as films are screened on these occasions. It may be, of course, that your correspondent is referring to our brother society, the Manchester and Salford Film Society, for we need two Film Societies here to pursue the deplorable standards of film appreciation alleged by Mr. Crone.

But in case your correspondent is serious, he may like to accept the offer of our Secretary, Dr. Bruce Jackson, who tells me that he suggested a meeting with Mr. Crone a year ago.

Yours faithfully,
MERVYN REEVES.

Censorship by Violence

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—In his article "Censorship by Violence?" appearing in your April issue, Mr. Clarke ascribes the rumpus at the New Gallery, and the withdrawal of *Sword in the Desert* exclusively to a Fascist minority. Here, he infers, censorship by violence emerges for the first time, with possible consequences of the gravest sort. But for the anti-Semitic thugs, our British public with joyful docility would have swallowed this film despite, let me add, an artistic ineptitude and a vicious anti-British bias, which even embarrassed the American press.

Here, I suggest, we have a special pleading of a most confused sort. As a Liberal, I detest censorship, legal or arbitrary, as I detest racial persecution. But now that Israel is a sovereign state, one must, I hold, no longer make a sentimental "mystique" of being pro-Semitic. We should feel free as the occasion arises to like or dislike the Jews, just as we dislike or like other great races—the Italians or the Chinese, for instance—colonies of whom are scattered across the world. No doubt, too, an intelligent criticism of our idiotic Palestine policy would do us good. But I can hold no brief for bad manners and the manufacture of bad blood.

Nor can I admit in the present instance that to dislike paying to see one's country insulted necessarily proves one to be either a Fascist or a Jew-baiter. With far shorter provocation than ours, censorship by violence long ago appeared in other countries. What of the Brussels riots against *Kermesse Héroïque*? Or the recent Jewish shindy in the United States over *Oliver Twist*? Have these incidents had any direly permanent consequences?

For years the English have quietly accepted films from Hollywood—and for that matter from a Rossellini working with American capital—that belittle and abuse our culture and our achievements. Errol Flynn takes Burma single-handed; *East of the Rising Sun* made it clear that the only Englishman in occupied Malaya was a sodden traitor who grew rubber for the enemy, till pulled up by a "pep" talk from Spencer Tracy.

The makers of such pictures are shrewd business-men. Obviously they have their fingers on an important anti-British market in the

States, and count confidently upon our traditional masochism. Nor do we show a flicker of retaliation. No British films about the Negro question south of the Mason-Dixon line, nor about the American débâcles at the Kaiserine Pass or in the Battle of the Bulge. Instead, with the obsequiousness of a Levantine dragoman who knows which side his bread is buttered, we even slip an American co-hero into a film about the Guards Armoured Division. I am proud of this restraint. But I think Hollywood should be taught not to make money out of poisoning Anglo-American relations. The ugly side of this story is not "Censorship by Violence", but the fact that G.F.D., by accepting the film for distribution, gave the Fascists an opportunity to identify themselves for the first time with the secret feelings of the British people.

Yours faithfully,
SIMON HARCOURT-SMITH.

Mushroom Festivals

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—SIGHT AND SOUND judges the levels of film festivals solely by the quality of films shown. But what is a film without an audience? A film festival designed as a high-class publicity drive cum connoisseur's bean-feast, of course, has its values—often purely financial.

Dr. Julius de Leeuwe makes the sound point that at Marianske-Lazne free and keen discussions "took place on whatever subject could be of value to film art or industry". But the most important revelation in his letter is the nature of the mass film festivals of Pilsen, Most, Gottwaldov, Ostrava and Bratislava.

I detect a note of snobbishness in your comment on the films at these festivals being judged by labourers, but there is no doubt where the value of these festivals lay *because* the juries were representatives of real-life audiences. Like you, I too hope we shall hear more from Dr. de Leeuwe about them—the films shown, the reactions of the audiences, the views of the judges as well as those of the film makers.

If Marianske-Lazne, Pilsen, Most, Gottwaldov and so on were mushroom festivals, I should add the personal note that, anyway, I enjoy mushrooms.

Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL.

CONTRIBUTORS

RAYMOND CHANDLER. Novelist—*The Big Sleep*, *Farewell My Lovely*, *The High Window*, *The Lady in the Lake* are among his best known, and have all been filmed. Original film script: *The Blue Dahlia*.

PHILIP HOPE-WALLACE. Critic and broadcaster: drama and opera reviews for *Time and Tide*, radio drama critic of *The Listener*, drama critic of the *Manchester Guardian*.

ROGER MANVELL. Author of *Film* (Pelican): editor of National Cinema Series for Falcon Press, and *Experiment in the Film*. Director of the British Film Academy.

BERNARD MILES. Actor, writer, director: films (acted) include *Great Expectations*, *Fame is the Spur*, *Thunder Rock*: appeared in, co-scripted and directed *Tawny Pipit* and *Chance of a Lifetime*.

JEAN QUEVAL. French critic and journalist: reviews for *L'Ecran Français*, and recently awarded a bursary to work in England.

MARIE SETON. Film critic and historian. Edited *Time in the Sun* from parts of Eisenstein's Mexican material: has recently written a biography of Eisenstein, to be published later this year.

RICHARD WINNINGTON. Film critic-caricaturist for *News Chronicle* for several years: collection of criticisms, *Drawn and Quartered*, published recently.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Still:

NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY for *Shooting Stars*, *Morning Glory*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Grand Hotel*, *It Happened One Night*, *Way Down East*, *Orphans of the Storm*.

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER for *The Good Earth*, *Mrs. Miniver*, *Grand Hotel*.

20TH CENTURY-FOX for *Panic in the Streets*, *Night and the City*.

PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *The Heiress*, *The Lost Weekend*.

UNITED ARTISTS for *The Men*.

WARNER BROS. for *Louis Pasteur*, *Casablanca*.

COLUMBIA PICTURES for *All the King's Men*.

AVON PRODUCTIONS (David Bradley) for *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*.

FILMS DE FRANCE for *Jour de Fête*, *Les Maudits*.

CORRESPONDENTS

U.S.A.: Harold Leonard FRANCE: Francis Koval.
ITALY: Frances Mullin Clark.

SIGHT AND SOUND'S GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Brief Pointers to the principal films showing in British cinemas during June. Last-minute changes of programme after our press-date may cause one or two inaccuracies (chiefly in the London area) but we hope this list may serve as a useful general guide. Films with an asterisk are particularly recommended.

ALL THE KING'S MEN. (Columbia.) Robert Rossen's award-winning picture about the rise to power of an American political tycoon turns out to be something of a disappointment: honest, serious, but over-long and pedestrian. (Broderick Crawford, John Ireland, Mercedes McCambridge, Joanne Dru.)

AMBUSH. (M.G.M.) A dare-devil Army Scout leads a mission to capture an Indian chief who is holding a white woman hostage. Robust and quite entertaining Western. (Robert Taylor, John Hodiak: director, Sam Wood.)

BATTLEGROUND. (M.G.M.) An American episode of the Battle of the Bulge, efficiently staged but deficient in real feeling. (Van Johnson, John Hodiak, James Whitmore: director, William Wellman.)

BEAUTIFUL BLONDE FROM BASHFUL BEND, The. (Fox.) New Preston Sturges comedy with Betty Grable as a sharp-shooting saloon singer on the run, mistaken for the new schoolmistress in a remote Western village. A few good moments but mainly below par. Technicolor. (Cesar Romero, Olga San Juan.)

BIG LIFT, The. (Fox.) Romance and politics mingled uneasily in the story of two American airmen in contemporary Berlin. Striking location material and good acting: but the story itself, while not without shrewd touches, is in the main unreal. (Montgomery Clift, Paul Douglas: director, George Seaton.)

BLACK HAND, The. (M.G.M.) Synthetic but occasionally exciting melodrama about vendettas among Italian immigrants in New York. Gene Kelly admirable in a straight part. (J. Carrol Naish: director, Richard Thorpe.)

***CHANCE OF A LIFETIME.** (Two Cities.) Bernard Miles' independent venture is a slight but genuinely fresh and original British picture which treats a social problem (relations between capital and labour) with good humour. (Basil Radford, Bernard Miles, Geoffrey Keene: associate director, Alan Osbiston.)

***DIVIDING LINE, The.** (Paramount.) A study of mob feeling in a small American town near the Mexican border, culminating in the attempted lynching of a Spanish-American boy. A little slow in starting, but strongly, absorbingly presented and honest in feeling. (Macdonald Carey, Gail Russell: director, Joseph Losey.)

EAST SIDE, WEST SIDE. (M.G.M.) Leisurely study of the emotional tangles of New York socialites: commonplace, but accomplished in presentation and acting. (Barbara Stanwyck, Van Heflin, James Mason: director, Mervyn LeRoy.)

FANNY. (G.C.T.) The second part of Marcel Pagnol's richly flavoured trilogy of French provincial life. Fine acting. (Raimu, Pierre Fresnay: director, Marc Allegret. 1932.)

ICHABOD AND Mr. TOAD. (R.K.O.) Disney's versions of *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Headless Horseman*: mechanical efficiency unflawed, inspiration noticeably flagging.

IN A LONELY PLACE. (Columbia.) The love-affair of a Hollywood scriptwriter and a girl in the shadow of a murder case. Fair. (Humphrey Bogart, Gloria Grahame: director, Nicholas Ray.)

INSPECTOR GENERAL, The. (Warner.) Danny Kaye extravaganza (from Gogol's play), patchy in treatment: a few good moments. (Elsa Lanchester, Walter Slezak: director, Henry Koster.)

***JOUR DE FETE.** (Films de France.) Charming, effervescent French comedy, with the background of a village fair: in the foreground, the adventures of an engaging comedian, Jacques Tati, who also directed.

LAST HOLIDAY. (A.B.P.C.) Priestley story of a man who believes he has only six weeks to live and spends them in a seaside hotel: good background and playing, a rather theatrically contrived plot. (Alec Guinness, Kay Walsh: director, Henry Cass.)

***LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN.** (Eros.) Touching and delicate romantic story, set in Vienna of the 1900's, of the lost love of a young girl for a pianist. (Joan Fontaine, Louis Jourdan: director, Max Ophuls.)

LOST BOUNDARIES. (International.) First of the Negro problem pictures, about a family who "passed" as white and the reactions of a community to the discovery of their negro blood. Sincere but pedestrian. (Mel Ferrer, Beatrice Pearson: director, Alfred Werker.)

NO MAN OF HER OWN (Paramount.) A tensely concocted drama with Barbara Stanwyck (outstanding) as a girl who makes a new life for herself until her past catches up with her in blackmail and murder. Very clever hokum. (John Lund, Jane Cowl: director, Mitchell Leisen.)

***ORPHEE.** (Films de France.) Cocteau's modern retelling of the Orpheus myth. Very fascinating. (Jean Marais, Maria Casares, Francois Perier.)

RETOUR A LA VIE. (Film Traders.) Five episodes about the returning French soldier and his post-war problems. Rather undistinguished. (Jouvet, Reggiani, Noel-Noel, Patricia Roc: directors, Clouzot, Dreville, Lampin, Cayatte.)

***SEARCH, The.** (M.G.M.) A moving story of the displaced persons of Germany, centred on a lost small boy who is rescued by a G.I. and eventually reunited with his mother. (Montgomery Clift, Ivan Jandl: director, Fred Zinneman.)

***SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON.** (R.K.O.) John Ford's latest (Technicolor) Western, his best film since *My Darling Clementine*. Some lapses of taste and a certain impatience in the handling make it below his best, but the whole has an invigorating sweep and command. (John Wayne, Mildred Natwick, Joanne Dru, Victor McLaglen.)

SO LONG AT THE FAIR. (Gainsborough.) The fascinating story of a young Englishman who disappears from his Paris hotel on the eve of the 1885 Exhibition: made with care but without imagination. (Jean Simmons, Dirk Bogarde: directors, Terence Fisher and Antony Darnborough.)

STAGE FRIGHT. (Warner.) A new British-made Hitchcock with an Anglo-American cast: a man-on-the-run story with London backgrounds. There are signs of a return to an earlier and better style, but the handling is still slow and overblown. (Dietrich, Jane Wyman, Richard Todd, Michael Wilding.)

STATE SECRET. (London Films.) British thriller about an American surgeon on the run in the central European police state of Vosnia. A general lack of incisiveness diminishes excitement. (Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Herbert Lom, Glynis Johns: director, Sidney Gilliat.)

STROMBOLI. (R.K.O.) Badly made, uninteresting story of a D.P. who marries an Italian fisherman. (Ingrid Bergman: director, Roberto Rossellini.)

***TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH.** (Fox.) A level-headed, convincing and exciting study of personal relationships under war strain, with a notable performance by Gregory Peck. (Dean Jagger, Gary Merrill: director, Henry King.)

WHEN WILLIE COMES MARCHING HOME. (Fox.) A Sturges-type subject about an American airman who gets parachuted by mistake into occupied France and becomes a hero. Half-hearted satire on American small-town patriotism and resistance films. (Dan Dailey, Corinne Calvet: director, John Ford.)

YELLOW CAB MAN, The. (M.G.M.) New Red Skelton comedy, introducing the American trick photographer, Weegee: very crude in parts, but amusing in others. (Director, Jack Donohue.)

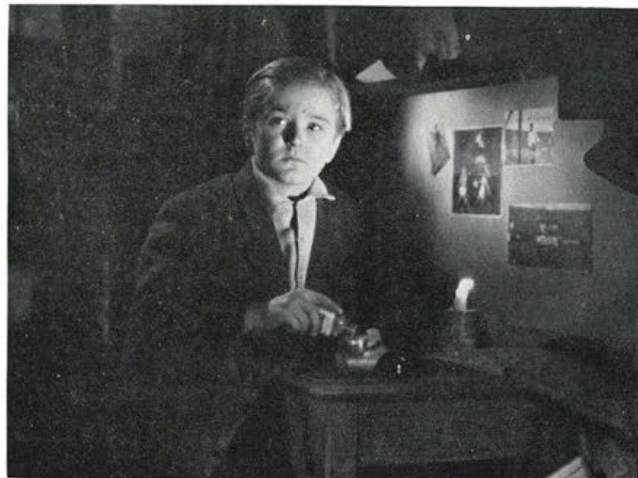
YOUNG MAN OF MUSIC. (Warner.) The rise and fall (and last-minute redemption) of a jazz trumpeter. A good subject rather seriously compromised, but with some notable scenes between box office concessions. (Kirk Douglas, Lauren Bacall, Hoagy Carmichael, Doris Day: director, Michael Curtiz.)

COMPETITION

Report on No. 2. The second competition—identification of the early films of directors who have since become famous—defeated most entrants. The correct solution was: top row—*Dance, Pretty Lady* (Anthony Asquith), *Secret Agent* (Alfred Hitchcock); middle row—*The High Command* (Thorold Dickinson), *Prisoner of Shark Island* (John Ford); bottom row—*Jezebel* (William Wyler), *Kipps* (Carol Reed). Book tokens have been sent to Miss Yvonne Saxon of 39, Upsdell Avenue, Palmers Green, N.13 (25s.), and to Mr. T. D. Lee

of 4, Kingsfield Road, Watford, Herts. (10s. 6d.).

No. 4. The six stills are from films made by well-known directors working outside their own countries. Can you identify (a) the film, (b) the director? The usual prizes for the first and second correct entries to be opened. Closing date, June 16th. Entries should be addressed to *SIGHT AND SOUND*, British Film Institute, 164, Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.C.2, with "Competition" marked on top left-hand corner of envelope.



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